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Nov. 3, 1917

Adventure

Vol. 15 No. 3

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MID-NOVEMBER ADVENTURE

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Adventure
Vol. 15
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November 3, 1917

PENITENTIARY POST

A Complete Novel

By Kathrene and Robert Pinkerton

Authors of "The Iron Factor," "The Northwoman," etc.

CHAPTER I

YOUTH

PHILIP BOYNTON had seen two white men in a year and a half. He had arrived at the Split Falls post of the Hudson's Bay Company on the last ice of the Spring, having been rushed in by a wise old district superintendent who saw in Phil's apparently mutinous demeanor merely the expression of a need of something difficult to do.

That difficult task, the routing of a particularly ingenious and energetic opposition, had kept Phil from going out with the fur brigade in the Summer. He did not regret his non-attendance at the gathering of the post-managers at district headquarters because he was too actively engaged in the consummation of a plot born of the devilishness of his own pent-up energy and enthusiasm.

As a result of this plot the too ambitious Free-trader had been glad to accept Phil's offer of protection from a mysteriously enraged band of Indians and even more glad to get out of the country at the Hudson's Bay Company's expense. Phil charged the item to "extension of trade," making a place for it in his report blank. He was particularly pleased with himself, for he had given a new twist to an old trick of fur land, that land where two hundred years of precedent have developed a code of ethics entirely in keeping with the harshness and the loneliness of the land itself.

This little business out of the way and the Indians properly impressed with the reprehensibleness of their disaffection, Phil began to look forward to the annual New Year's gathering of post-managers. His was the most distant post of the district and he would have to start December first. The last week in November an epidemic of hydrophobia wiped out all the teams of dogs in his corral and he was forced to settle down to an eventless and mailless Winter.

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The Winter passed, as those dark, cold, interminable Winters have passed with countless managers of isolated Hudson's Bay Company posts for more than two hundred years, and Summer brought with it the triumphant journey of the fur-laden brigade. For Phil's three York boats would be laden as never before in the history of the post.

Only Phil did not go out with the brigade. The Company's flag was not run to the top of the flag-pole to indicate the departure of the post-manager. Instead, that ruler of a little wilderness kingdom lay flat on his back in the dwelling house, alternately listening to the excited chatter of the thirty Indian boatmen and cursing the broken leg that lay motionless beneath the weight of a dunnage-bag filled with sand.

It was Fall when the brigade returned. Phil was walking without even a limp, due to the skill of his Indian servant, and was the first to greet the boatmen and receive the precious bag with a whole year's mail. He gave hurried, excited directions for the unloading, dealt out a regale for the crew with a scandalously reckless hand for so distant a post, and then ran with a schoolboy's skip and jump to his office to read the package of letters.

It was not so imposing a bundle as one might expect. Few of us receive more personal letters than we write, and when mail days are usually six months apart our correspondence decreases proportionately. The first few years of separation are exceptions, but Phil had seen a dozen North-country Winters, and the world had grown very far away.

Nevertheless, he tossed aside impatiently the long, official envelopes of the Company, tearing open only those with the postmark of a small English city. He glanced hastily at each, commenting excitedly as he did so.

"Mother's all over her attack of the grippe."

(Mother had fully recovered eighteen months before.)

"Well think of that! Little Sis to be married!"

(Sis was already the mother of a boy.)

"The governor's bought a motor-car. Getting to be a regular sport."

(The governor had forgotten that car completely, in the possession of a new marvel.)

"Uncle Philip's still alive. Some folks never die."

(Uncle Philip's unaccountable will, by which he had left his relatives only a pound each, had been in court a year.)

After Phil had skimmed the cream from the news, he began systematically to read the letters from home. It was dark when he had finished and at last became aware of his housekeeper's insistent calls to supper. After he had eaten he was busy in the trading-shop until late, paying off the boatmen, dealing out goods to them and arranging with the Indian hunters for their annual Fall debt.

The next day and the next it was the same. All the Indians had gathered at the post to wait for the York boats and were eager to be off to their hunting-grounds. At the end of the third day the last was gone and Phil remembered the official mail for the first time.

There wasn't much of it, and some of it was old. He glanced through it rapidly, scorning the suggestions contained, eager for some word of commendation because of his triumph over the Free-trader the year before. The signature of the second letter brought him up with a start. The wise old superintendent was no longer in charge of the district. His successor was a stranger.

Phil read more carefully, returning to a letter he had only glanced at. The kindly, almost paternal, note of the former superintendent was lacking. He had understood men, the peculiar type of men bred by the isolation and the work and the distorting influences of loneliness. He made a personal matter of a purely business communication, and he was loved for it.

If his successor understood the North country and its people he did not show it. Because Phil had never heard of him he jumped at the conclusion that the new incumbent was an upstart, officious, conscious of his position, unreasonable in his demands. As a matter of fact, it was a simple business communication, a letter of instruction untempered by a note of friendliness. It was a letter of a stranger to a stranger, not of a man to a man, and Phil's indignation increased rapidly as he ran through three more of the same sort.

"Unbusinesslike conduct of posts!" he exclaimed when he had finished. "And I've just sent in more fur than this post ever sent before."

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He picked out another irritating clause.

"Unsystematic nature of the reports! What more does he want? I told everything in the reports a man could tell. And he got the fur and he knows how much goods I received."

Then a new one caught his eye.

There has been a failure to observe certain well-known regulations and to heed more recent requests as to the nature of reports desired. More strict adherence to business methods is expected in the future.

Phil stared at the letter in open-mouth astonishment. But he did not explode again. Instead came a sullen resentment, a somber acerbity, that grew as the days passed and he read and reread the obnoxious communications.

There was no one at Split Falls post with whom Phil could discuss what he considered a legitimate cause for righteous indignation. That was the trouble. For a year and a half there had been no one with whom he could discuss anything of importance. In those eighteen months he had seen only two white men, the Free-trader whose departure had been so hurried, and a geological survey man who had seen no reason why he should neglect science to entertain a lonely representative of the Hudson's Bay Company. The mere fact that Phil had saved him from starvation did not obligate geology.

The quick Winter came and found the post-manager moody and irritable. Had he not wiped out the opposition that had threatened to ruin the Company's business in that region? Had he not done so after two others had failed to stay the downward trend of the fur receipts? Had he not just sent out the largest shipment of fur the post had ever known? Then why should he be censured, picked out as an object of castigation? Why should his success be ignored and fault found with a lot of rot to which no one had ever paid any attention?

The first of November Phil's indignation culminated in a sudden resolve. He would go down to the district office and ask this upstart what he meant by writing him such a letter. He would show this officious superior that Phil Boynton at least would not submit to unmerited criticism. He'd run down and tell him to his face what he thought of him.

And Phil did run down. With one dog team to haul him, another for the supplies, and two Indians to break trail, drive, make camp and cook, he left his post to the care of an Indian servant and set off through five hundred miles of wilderness to have five minutes of satisfactory conversation.

THE journey was difficult, even for the North country. There were days when they made only ten miles, and there were other days when they sat huddled about a small fire while the blizzard roared through the stunted spruce that offered only a semblance of protection. Snow seemed to fall continually, and the work of breaking trail was so difficult that even the Indians remarked upon it.

But at last Phil arrived at the post which was the headquarters of his district. As the dogs, now on a hard trail, raced across the ice toward the distant buildings, Phil forgot the object of his journey in the prospect of again communing with his fellows. Old times at the post, where he had served the first two years of his apprenticeship, were recalled, and as he dashed up to the superintendent's office he became again the careless, happy, companionable chap who had made himself a favorite throughout a district as large as all Europe.

Perhaps it was the absence of familiar faces as he stepped out of the cariole that brought back to him the real reason for his journey. The indignation of months returned, and he strode into the office, black and grimy from the smoke of many campfires, still dressed in his skins and furs, his hair about his shoulders and his face long unshaven.

At first Phil believed the office was empty. Then he saw a head appear above a roll-top desk in a corner and the next instant a man stepped out into the middle of the room. He wore well-pressed clothes, a linen collar and shirt, a neatly knotted tie, and on his feet were shoes that were actually polished.

These things alone did not confirm Phil in his hatred for one whom he knew instantly to be the new superintedent. Many of the Company's men at the larger posts dress as men do in cities, and in some places the formalities of a court are maintained. But this man's cool, businesslike appearance stamped him at once as some one alien to the North country. He belonged a thousand miles farther south was all Phil

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thought as he slipped the otter-trimmed hood of his skin coat back from his head.

"I'm Boynton, from Split Rock," he said. "I want to see Mr. Borthwick."

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Boynton," was the reply. "I'm Mr. Borthwick."

Phil ignored the outstretched hand, but before he could speak Borthwick continued:

"New Year's is three weeks off. Some trouble at Split Rock post?"

"Split Rock post was never in better shape," replied Phil hotly. "And I know New Year's is three weeks off. Here's why I came down," and he shoved a soiled and crumpled letter toward the superintendent.

Borthwick shot a quick, questioning look at the post-manager and then coolly unfolded the letter. He glanced at it an instant.

"Well?"

"Well!" repeated Phil, "Isn't that enough?"

"I hardly understand," and Borthwick again glanced at the letter. "Perhaps there is some mistake. This is only one of my letters to you."

"Of course it's only one of your letters to me. But I want to know what you mean by it."

For the third time Borthwick looked over the letter, this time reading it from end to end.

"I still fail to see," he finally said, "why this should necessitate a trip of a thousand miles at the Company's expense when the regular channels of communication are still open."

"You don't!"

"Certainly not. In this letter I have merely made certain suggestions and called your attention to certain things. All are matters of routine, things pertaining to the Company's business. There is absolutely no excuse for your putting the Company to the expense of a trip down here on so trivial a matter."

"Trivial!"

Phil, his indignation culminating in a blind rage, could only repeat the word and stare at the cool, precise individual before him. His hands were clenched and he raised himself on to his toes several times as though preparing for a spring.

And then suddenly he realized that Borthwick never could understand, that he was not of the North country, that he did not know North country men, never could know them. To him the effort and work of a year alone, the isolation and the lonesomeness, the total absence of the things that go to make up the normal life of a man, all meant nothing. To this man he, Phil Boynton, was not a human being but merely the manager of Split Rock post, the bloodless, nerveless, soulless automaton sent there to transact the Company's business.

Phil contrasted him with the wise old superintendent he had succeeded, the man who knew men and their limitations, who had been one of them and one of the Company, working for its interests, loyal to it and its spirit and its precedents, putting it first but, like the Company, not necessarily leaving them out of consideration.

Phil became suddenly cool and collected.

"You are the new superintendent of this district?" he asked quietly.

"Yes."

"All right. I'm through. I quit. I've worked for the Company more than ten years, ever since I was a kid. I've always given it the best I had, and I've always felt that the Company did the same with me. But if you are superintendent, if they are going to bring penny-counters from the shops in Winnipeg and put them in charge up here, I'm through."

"You mean you have deserted your post and come down here on a mythical pretext."

"Not another word out of you!" roared Phil. "You're lucky to get off with no more than I've given you. If the Company is making superintendents out of men like you, I'm through with the Company."

He turned and walked out of the door before Borthwick could reply. His Indians had already put their dogs in the corral and were eating supper in the Indian house. Phil made his way across to Bachelors' Hall, only to be disappointed again by finding its only occupants were two apprentice clerks fresh from England. A few inquiries revealed that there was no one at the post whom he had ever seen.

In complete disgust he prepared for supper. He could look forward only to a second meeting with Borthwick at meal time. As he changed his clothes he thought of cutting things to say, of remarks about the post as it had been in the good old days.

But at the table Borthwick was uncommunicative, though polite. He seemed clothed in an air so impersonal that Phil,

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ough boiling inwardly, found no opening, ven for the subtle comments to which alone e had recourse because of the presence of Irs. Borthwick. The apprentice clerks eemed to be afraid to talk. Mrs. Borthick had a lofty idea of the position she ccupied as mistress of the district and unr the suffocating weight of the formality ie imposed, Phil worried through his st really civilized meal in a year and half.

He was glad to escape at the end and ished immediately to the Indian house. s a result of five minutes of voluble Cree e was in a cariole hours before daylight ie next morning and when Borthwick wakened was on his way to Winnipeg, one am hauling him as he lay back comfortbly in his robes, while another followed ith the provisons for the journey.

It was five hundred miles to Winnipeg, nd Phil covered the distance in only ightly less time than that from Split Rock the headquarters post. He went at once the Company's offices, turned in his writn resignation and drew his accumulated lary, seven hundred and fifty dollars. either the commissioner nor the assistant mmissioner was there and Phil left at ice without an explanation of why, after a ozen years, he chose to leave the service of ie company of Gentlemen Adventurers rading into Hudson's Bay.

That night, in clean, well-pressed clothes, s hair cut and his face shaved, Phil Boyn-n thrust his legs beneath a hotel table r the first time in five years. He had een in Winnipeg before, on his first and ly leave of absence, and, though he was a mplete stranger, he felt as if he were at me. The lights, the music, the smart nen and silverware on the table, the chatr throughout the big room, the odors of od and drink, all were as wine to unaccusmed lips. Merely being there intoxicated im. The long years of loneliness were forotten, the hatred for Borthwick was as if had never been, and he abandoned himelf to the present.

Consequently, when a man was seated at is table five minutes later, the attention of ie entire dining-room was attracted by hil's outburst.

"Jerry McGill!" he cried in a voice heard the lobby. "Sit down. Stand up and hake again. Have a drink. This meal's n me. Where'd you come from? What Providence sent you here? I thought you were way down the McKenzie."

McGill was no less boisterous in his greetings and it was five minutes before they became joint possessors of the information that Philip Boynton, late of the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, and Jerry McGill, corporal of the Royal Northwest Mounted, were really sitting together at a table in Winnipeg, tasting of the delights of civilization after long absence; that each was having dinner on the other and that they were to make a night of it.

The number of years a man has lived counts for nothing after a long stay in the wilderness. The return of civilization levels ages, brings all down to the exuberant period of youth. The sailor after a long voyage, the cowboy after months on the range, the lumberjack after a Winter in the woods, each on his return to town becomes a boy, a wild, heedless, shouting, intoxicated boy.

Phil Boynton and Jerry McGill, freed of the fetters of interminable distances, celebrated their reunion as only men of the Northland can celebrate. What happened would be difficult to say. Phil himself could not remember when he wakened in the middle of the next forenoon. He was in his room in the hotel. Beside him, fully dressed, lay Corporal McGill. It was all unfamiliar, but this strange bedfellow brought back dim recollections, the second or third of which caused Phil to spring from bed with utter disregard for his head.

A quick search of his pockets revealed one roll of bills. He counted these anxiously, and then again. There was only four hundred and fifty dollars when there should have been seven hundred and fifty dollars, less what little he had probably spent the night before.

"Jerry!" he cried, shaking the policeman. "Jerry! Wake up! Where's my money? I didn't spend all of that!"

But Jerry refused to waken and Phil again searched his pockets. This time he found in the inside breast-pocket of his coat a long white envelope. In bewilderment he opnened it and drew out a piece of green paper which unfolded with queer little jerks like a child's toy until it stretched to the floor.

Still bewildered, Phil examined it.

"Winnipeg to St. Paul."

"St. Paul to Chicago."

"Chicago to Montreal."

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"Montreal to Liverpool."

And then it began reading backward.

"Liverpool to Montreal."

"Montreal to Chicago."

He did not have to go farther. He knew what he had done. He was now the possessor of a round-trip ticket home, which had cost something more than two hundred dollars.

Still stunned by his discovery, Phil sat down on the edge of the bed. Home! Mother! The governor and his new motor-car! It was twelve years since he had seen them. He had been a boy, eighteen years old, when he had said goodby and, despite their protests, sailed away to British America. He would like to see them.

He shaved, dressed, packed his bag and then turned to the bed.

"Wake up!" he called as he shook the snoring man. "Wake up, Jerry!"

The policeman turned over and stared with puzzled eyes.

"I'm going home!" Phil cried excitedly. "So long!"

McGill swung his feet to the floor and stared at the other.

"Where?" he asked suspiciously.

"Home. England."

"Oh!" and he rolled on to the bed again. "You'll be back soon. I went once. They're sending me up to the Bay and I'll see you there inside of a year."

CHAPTER II

TWO BARS ON THE MAGNET

PHIL did go back. For a month his visit home was pure delight. He was the returned wanderer, the eldest son, and he reveled in the adoration of mother and sister, the unbending of his father and the unaccustomed creature comforts of civilization.

Then the change came. After the excitement of his return had vanished he saw that he was no longer an Englishman, that he no longer was in accord with venerable English ideas. Thrown into a strange environment when at a plastic age, he had shed English thoughts and habits for those of a wide, raw land. As a result, he was a stranger to his family, and his family to him. He was bored. They were scandalized. Conditions became strained. He wished he hadn't come.

ONE day Phil suddenly realized the cause of an insidious restlessness. It was the North country, the only thing he cared about, the only place he knew, and where he in turn could be understood. He took a train to London and dropped in at the offices of the Hudson's Bay Company.

There is no other corporation in the world like it. Its servants, as they are still called in the contracts, are its children, and no mother was ever more forgiving of errant or vagrant offspring. Phil was welcomed with open arms, reemployed and sent out on the first ship of the Summer. His joy was so great he could even laugh at the relief with which his father and mother greeted his announcement that he was returning to Canada.

Captain Hargraft had commanded the ship on Phil's previous voyage. He remembered him, as he remembered all the young English and Scotch boys he had taken into Hudson Bay, and Phil received a cordial greeting.

"We have a lady passenger this trip," said the captain after they had talked for a while on the bridge. "Company is sending her over to be governess for some post-manager's children near the Bay."

"English girl?" asked Phil.

"Yes, and a beauty. One of the big, tall, blonde kind. I'll fix you at the first table."

"Captain, let me mess with the crew. Serve my meals in my room. Starve me, if necessary. But don't put me at the same table with an English girl. I'm fed up on them. I haven't seen anything else for months. If there's a breed girl from Norway House on board, all right. I'd like to talk to one. But not the English kind."

"Wait," was all the captain said.

Even Phil's first voyage, when he had hardly slept nights, so impatient was he to see the land of his dreams, failed to compare with the ecstasy of his second in company with Joyce Plummer. It was not that he had been starved by his twelve years in the wilderness. It was not that he turned in relief to this thoroughly delightful young woman after the boredom of his family's friends. It was because she was in reality the girl he had dreamed of at solitary posts.

Joyce Plummer so nearly fitted his picture Phil could not look at her for several

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days without a somewhat superstitious feeling of awe. From the first meal he worshiped, generally silently, always with a conscious effort to conceal what he felt must be a most evident adoration.

It was inevitable that Joyce Plummer had been worshiped thus before. Perhaps that was the reason she appeared to be so unconscious of Phil's attitude toward her, a fact which, unknown to him, added to her charm. She had that faculty of ignoring the differences of sex, of understanding things wholly within men's sphere. She not only showed interest in men's activities but could talk intelligently about them.

But the real bond between them, the common ground upon which they met from the beginning, was her almost masculine appreciation of the romantic aspects of life in the country to which she was going.

"How did you happen to enter the Hudson's Bay service?" she asked him that first afternoon.

"Ballantyne," he answered, and instantly her face lit up.

"Me, too!" she cried. " 'Ungava,' 'Hudson Bay,' 'The Young Fur Traders.' I've read every word of them, several times."

"They've started more young fellows in the service than any other one thing."

"And are you disappointed afterwards?"

"In a way, but you don't think of that. Something else takes its place, I guess. It's just as you would expect it, after reading Ballantyne, and yet it's altogether different. I don't think any one can tell exactly what it is about the North country that draws him so. The Lord knows there are enough things about it to drive a man away. And yet they don't. He sticks, or he goes back, and he's always unhappy when he's away and always glad to get back again."

"That's just as I knew it would be," she exclaimed. "I knew some things would be different. But I knew that the real things, the love for the land, would come."

"It's strange your knowing that before you go. I didn't know it and yet it is what will really come true."

"But perhaps that's because you didn't come from a Hudson's Bay family," answered the girl quickly. "It must be that the love of the land was born in me. All my life it has been there. My father and my uncle were Hudson's Bay men. Only my father could not stay in the country. My mother was not strong enough to go there and so he had to come back to England. And always for her sake he hid his wish to return. But as a child I realized it. And when we were alone we used to talk of the country. I guess his longing was born in me. That was why, when my mother died and there was no one to keep me in England, I was so glad to go out there as a governess. It seems almost that I must live that life for both father and myself."

Joyce's words explained to Phil her surprising knowledge of the Company, its methods and the lives of its servants. For, while her understanding enthusiasm for the purely masculine activities of the Hudson's Bay Company had charmed him, it had also puzzled. He would have been quick to feel a forced interest or a desire for the bizarre. He would have been repelled by either pretense or hoydenism. But the naturalness and sincerity of her ardor compelled acceptance and won him completely.

Phil was so thoroughly entranced he gave no thought to anything else. Had his captivation been less complete he would have given some consideration to the future, would have wondered at least into what the present was leading him. But never a thought of it entered his head until he was suddenly brought face to face with reality by an entirely innocent question from Miss Plummer.

"What will you do when you get to the Bay?"

"Whatever they have for me to do," he said when he recovered from the shock. "Sent out to some post if there is a vacancy. There probably is one or the London office wouldn't have sent me to the Savant Lake district."

"And will your resignation and return to the service result in your being given an unimportant post? Sort of a punishment for running away?"

"They do punish that way sometimes. But the chances are that the Savant Lake superintendent will not know anything about that, or care. He'll put me where he needs me, or where he wants to put me."

"But he will surely know what you did at Split Rock before you left, of how you drove out the opposition."

Phil flushed at this interpretation of a story he had told with an entirely different

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purpose. To him the flight of the Free-trader had been only amusing in the retrospect.

"A man's reputation does help, at times, but mine's rather mixed, I'm afraid," he laughed.

His face instantly became serious. A thought had come to him that sobered him completely. Joyce saw the quick change in his expression.

"What is it?" she asked.

"I just happened to think of the posts in the district. I've never been in it, but of course I've heard all about it and know of every post."

"And there is one that—one that isn't popular?"

" 'Not popular' hardly expresses it."

He shivered and looked out over the sea.

"There is a little post I'd forgotten about," he said at last. "And maybe they'll send me there, though I never did anything to deserve such a fate, even by quitting. It's out of the world entirely. It's way out past the rim of things, even for the North country. It's the most desolate, horrible spot you could imagine, more desolate and more horrible than you can dream of until you have seen a little of the land you're going to. Most posts are lonely, but there is something about this one that has given it a reputation from Rigolet to McPherson. It's called Penitentiary Post, and that is what it has been, a prison for the man in charge, a punishment worse than any one in the service has ever deserved. I think they keep it open just for that purpose."

Something in the tense tone of the fur-trader caused Joyce to look at him apprehensively.

"But they wouldn't send you there!" she protested.

Phil smiled. Her confidence did relieve his apprehension, but he knew that he was never destined for Penitentiary Post. His talks in the London office had given him an insight into his value to the Company. The successful meeting of competition, the adaptation to new conditions of the fur trade, these demanded men other than those of the old school, men not too thoroughly steeped in the old methods of transacting a business that is not like any other business in the world.

"No," he said with a confident smile, "I'll never be sent to Penitentiary Post."

CHAPTER III

PHIL GETS HIS POST

THE journey of Joyce Plummer and Philip Boynton did not end with the sea voyage. Each was bound for Savant House, which meant a canoe trip of four hundred miles together.

From the day the girl had landed from the ship, which anchored twenty miles out from shore, she had been enthralled with her surroundings, with the things she saw and the many things she heard. For the first time, too, Phil was denied what he had come to consider his exclusive prerogative. There were several men at the great depot on the bay where the ship unloaded, men who had not seen a white woman for so long the fair beauty of Joyce Plummer fairly stunned them.

But only for a moment. Post-managers and district superintendents vied with each other for the privilege of showing her about, of sitting next to her at meal-times, of answering the questions with which she was so abundantly supplied. Phil was simply shoved to one side by that irresistible force that draws lonely men to a woman. He had to be content with only those crums Joyce managed to toss his way.

He was not entirely idle in the three days preceding their journey to Savant House, however. There was much news of the North country to listen to, news that told him of the past and of what the future might bring.

First, he learned his disaffection of the Winter before had not been an isolated case. Others had been aroused by the cold, unfamiliarly businesslike letters of Borthwick and the entire district had been in such a ferment that a new superintendent was on his way to succeed him.

Secondly, the district to which Phil was going was in charge of John Wickson. Claude Osborne was post-manager at Savant House and it was his children that were to be tutored by Miss Plummer.

Thirdly, Wickson would undoubtedly be glad to know he was to have Phil in his district. He had two vacancies, or would make one of them because of the inroads of a company of Free-traders.

"Everybody knows what you did at Split Rock," Phil was told, "and Wickson will shove you out to try your hand with

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these other fellows at Long Point. He's had two men in there in the last two years and the fur receipts have kept on falling. Old-timers, both of them, and they couldn't make headway against the opposition. And Wickson isn't the kind that stands for any one else getting the fur. It's a good post, and you'll like it there."

Consequently, when at last he and Joyce started up-river by canoe, each paddled by two Indians, Phil was once more in the seventh heaven of the sea voyage. Again he was alone with her, and he was going to a good post, one not so far from Savant House but that he could run down two or three times a year. The future held only entrancing dreams.

It was Phil's nature to live in the present, the present and the immediate future. His North country training as well as the boyishness that had persisted into manhood were responsible for this. He liked his work. Despite his resignation of the Winter before, he had that loyalty to the Company so characteristic of its servants. Men older in the service than he, brooding through a long solitude, had done similar things. It was only an instance of the independence of post-managers fostered by the Company itself to meet its peculiar conditions.

And it was in the present and the immediate future that Phil lived on the canoe journey with Joyce. On the ship she had been looking forward to the things of which she had talked and dreamed. No boy entering the service could have been more enraptured over the prospect of seeing his first post on the bay, his first Indians, his first canoes and York boats. Nor was there any of the sightseer in her attitude. She wished rather to become at once of the country, to take part in all its activities. She was not content to sit in the canoe and be paddled but insisted on plying a blade. She amused the Indians by carrying a small pack across portages. She even dabbled in the cooking and marveled at Phil's refusal to do anything at all.

"Why, it's jolly, this sort of things!" she exclaimed one day. "I don't see how you can sit and do nothing. I should think you would be bored to death, lying back there on all those blankets in the canoe."

"I always read when I'm traveling alone."

She looked at him rather scornfully.

"Don't you ever do anything?"

"Oh, I did at first. But one gets tired of it, and then it's not quite the thing, you know."

Frankly she surveyed his big, husky body.

"You should do it to keep fit," she declared. "And then it's such sport, far better than cricket or tennis. Why isn't it the thing?"

"Well, you see," and Phil nodded toward the Indians who were eating their noon meal nearer the river bank, "we have to let these people think that we're a little too good for work. They are the workers. We are the masters, and we can't ever let them forget it. It's always been the custom, and it's policy to keep it up."

"I believe you're only lazy," she said. "But I'm going to learn to paddle and snowshoe and drive dogs and do all the rest."

The memory of that journey never dimmed for Phil. It seemed for a time that it would never end, this floating side by side with the girl he loved in the land he loved. It seemed to be too perfect, but he never looked forward to the end, to the time, now near, when he would be compelled to leave her for six months of loneliness unbroken by even a letter.

Their complete isolation, that feeling of being in a little world of their own, had its effect on Joyce, too. Without speaking of it directly, without voicing thoughts which had become common, they drifted into a union which seemed sweeter because it was wordless. They were, in reality, two children in the wilderness, failing to comprehend anything except the present, unable to understand why all life should not be a pleasant drifting side by side.

All Savant House turned out to greet the new governess. John Wickson's reception of Phil was hardly less cordial, and though nothing was said, the young man knew at once to what post he would be sent. Unconsciously, too, he had begun to assume an air of proprietorship toward Joyce. He could be magnanimous now when others demanded her attention. Secretly it pleased him, and that first afternoon was spent in the office of the superintendent while the Osbornes monopolized Miss Plummer.

Wickson made no reference to Phil's resignation and reenlistment in the service of the Company. With just a mention of Split Rock post he let the young man know

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that he had heard of his work there. He emphasized, too, the necessity of more active methods in handling the opposition, gave his views on the subject and drew some from Phil. When supper-time came the best of relations had been established between them and again Phil thought of the pleasant year ahead of him.

He saw Joyce for a few minutes before supper.

For the first time her eyes were not laughing or lighted by a boundless interest in the country to which she had come.

"Did you hear about the poor fellow who was brought in here last week?" she asked.

"No. Who was it?"

"The post-manager from Fort Dease. He was taken out on the way to Winnipeg only yesterday."

"Hurt, was he?"

"No, so much worse than that. He's mad, Phil, mad as a March hare."

"Couldn't stand the lonesomeness, eh?"

"That's what they say. Why, Phil, such a thing must be terrible, being driven mad by the solitude."

She looked at him apprehensively, but he only laughed at the fear in her eyes.

"Something the matter with a man when he can't stand a year of that sort of a thing," he assured her. "Men have been doing it for more than two hundred years, in these little out-of-the-way posts.

"But, Phil, this man said it was something else, spirits, evil spirits, a 'weeteego,' he called it."

Phil refused to consider the matter seriously.

"The 'weeteego' came afterward, I guess," he said. "That's the Cree for 'evil spirit,' sort of a cannibal affair with them. After he went off his nut he probably thought he saw one."

"But when he was here he raved all the time about it. Mrs. Osborne says she doesn't think the man was mad but that he was simply scared out of his senses by something, though the men didn't take any more stock in it than you do. But she says he told about this 'weeteego' trying to get into his room at night and of hearing all sorts of strange sounds when he knew no one else was within many miles of him. She said it made her shiver, the stories he told her, and she says she is sure that he is not insane and that there is something back of what he said."

"Just the loneliness," Phil insisted. "He couldn't stand it, though the poor beggar probably had a hard time of it at Fort Dease."

"Why Fort Dease more than any other post?"

"Don't you remember my telling you of it, way out past the rim of things, the most desolate place imaginable, off there on the Bay? And you got some idea of how desolate a bay post may be."

"Not Penitentiary Post!"

"That's the name it generally goes by, though Fort Dease is the official name."

"And he was sent there, sent to be punished! Why, Phil, such a thing is terrible."

"Oh, perhaps he was only an apprentice clerk given his first tryout. Good thing he found out early that he couldn't stand the life."

THE call for supper came and the entire white population of the post gathered at the table. Wickson, who had been busy with some mail Phil had brought from the Bay, was seated opposite Joyce Plummer. They had met in the afternoon but only for a moment and the superintendent seemed to realize for the first time that she had arrived.

He was fascinated from the start, and he made no attempt to conceal the fact. He spoke to no one else at the table, and he gave Joyce scant opportunity to divide her attention. At first the girl was flattered by this tribute of the despot of an empire. She found in it a promise of agreeable companions through the year, for she had been won at once by the Osborne family.

But Joyce Plummer had never before seen a man like John Wickson. The man she had met had become of the North. He had always been of that land. Unlike so many of the Company's servants, he had not been brought from England or Scotland to serve his five years as an apprentice clerk and grow up in the service. His father and his father's father had been Company men, had died in its service in the North country. Wickson had been brought up in it, had never known anything else.

He had been born before confederation, just before that time when the Hudson's Bay Company had given up its ancient charter rights to the new Dominion of Canada. He had been brought up in the

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atmosphere of the old régime, among men who had never known any power, any law, except that of the Company. He came of the days when post-managers were still called factors or traders from force of habit, and when district superintendents were chief factors with the power of a Muscovite ruler.

It was in those times with its supreme authority over half a continent, with its semi-military system of conducting its business, with its isolation and its mystery and its aloofness, that the Company established customs and precedents bred a peculiar type of men and still managed, with all its autocracy, to give the world its first and greatest example of industrial welfare work.

Wickson was thoroughly of the old days in habits, training, thought and actions. He was big physically, about forty-two years old, thoroughly tanned, a cat on his feet despite his size. He had lived completely in the North and of it, knew the forest like an Indian, could out-drive a half-breed with dogs and wield as skilful a paddle as a Cree. In this he was different from the men imported from England. His vitality had been too rampant to permit physical indolence, and his skill and endurance had been great enough to win from the Indians more respect than had he merely posed as a ruler.

Naturally there was something untamed about Wickson. He had been associated with men of education and even culture. He had been known through a great wilderness for his thirst for books, and the long Winters in many posts had given him abundant time for study. He had investigated the various tribes of Indians with which he had come in contact with a scientific as well as a business interest, and he had contributed several monographs to a London ethnological magazine.

Yet he continued to be much of a savage. Long association with savage folk, a lifetime of ceaseless struggle with a savage wilderness, these had their first effect upon him and the deepest. He had never known a restraining influence except his devotion to the Company, and in his work his very lack of restraint had brought success and promotion.

Through it all Wickson had remained very much aloof. He had few friends, no intimates. Men feared him. Men were repelled by his coldness and his hardness, by his singleness of purpose, by his blunt, uncontrolled speech. He did not try to, or could not, hide his contempt or his lack of interest in them. To the people of the North who knew him, Wickson had remained an enigma. He was respected for what he had accomplished, feared for what he might say, sometimes laughed at when a thousand safe miles separated him from the mockers.

Wickson had seen women before. He had seen the wives of post-managers and district superintendents. He had been "out" several times, once to England. But for the first time in his life he found in a woman something he had never known existed.

It was not Joyce Plummer's beauty alone. It was not the lure of fair hair after a lifetime of the Indian's black. It was not the tall, well-formed figure that differed so strikingly from those of the mothers of post children and from the squat, broad-backed, straight-lined bodies of Indian women. It was not alone the eyes which seemed so alive and so eager.

It was, rather, the very soul of the girl herself as it sought expression in every line, every feature, every light in her eyes, every full tone of her rich voice. It was rather that which was suggested than that which was apparent, the potentiality of a nature that had already broken the bounds of home and precedent and tradition. Joyce Plummer really stood at the threshold of a new life. Perfectly genuine and sincere, eager for the unexpected, unprepared for disillusionment, in love with life and with this new phase of it to which she had looked forward for so long, she was impatient for the future.

Adding to her charm, and to her disarmament, was her boyish enthusiasm for the life upon which she was just entering. Like a boy, she had made heroes of every servant of the Hudson's Bay Company, from the lowliest tripper to the oldest post-manager. Like a boy, she looked forward to canoeing and shooting and to the long, cold Winter with its romantic dog-teams and skin-clad people.

To Philip Boynton these things had come imperceptibly. Daily he had found something new that appealed to him, and nightly he had pondered over it. Yet at the end he was unable to describe or explain one thing that drew him to her.

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John Wickson was not half through his meal before he understood her perfectly. Almost instantly, though unfamiliar with women like her, he had assayed and appraised and probed, and his mind had done it coolly, calmly, thoroughly, while the fire in his heart was mounting to a white heat.

But if he probed coolly he probed openly. He did not seek to hide the new light that came to his eyes, and when they arose at the end of the meal every one at the table knew it except Joyce herself.

To Mrs. Osborne alone did it bring alarm. Knowing the men of the North better, understanding Wickson's type, and, more than anything else, having read instantly the relation that already existed between Joyce and Phil, she trembled at the thought of what might happen. It was not that she feared the sincerity of the superintendent's motives, but she did dread what the power and the resistless energy and the very savagery of the man might bring. To her it spelled only unhappiness.

Phil felt nothing of jealousy or resentment, nothing of fear. Rather he was amused at this spectacle of bruin and the beauty, for as such he had instantly pictured them. In the weeks he had spent with Joyce he had not only come to accept the future with the loyalty of the girl. Though the real relations between them had been wordless, to him a bond had been signed.

Instinctively the two drew together as the party arose from the table and went into the living-room. Their eyes met in a perfect understanding. Their heads were bent and a whispered pleasantry passed between them.

Mrs. Osborne, directly in front, saw Wickson stare for a moment. She saw the light in his eyes, a light that flared to incandescence as he turned swiftly and strode on. Straight across the room he went until he was before his accustomed seat in a big chair by the table. But he did not sit down. For a moment he stood watching Phil and Joyce as they chatted in the doorway.

"Boynton," the superintendent broke in upon them. "Come over to the office with me."

Phil, startled, turned from Joyce. Every one was looking at him. Every one was silent, tense, expectant. He saw for the first time the expression on Wickson's face. Just a little puzzled, but a smile still parting his lips, he glanced again about the room.

"Certainly," he answered. "Whenever you say," and he turned to Joyce as she stood in the doorway.

"Now!" snapped Wickson.

He walked quickly across the room and out into the hall. Even the slamming of the outer door did not arouse the group in the living-room. Phil, startled again by the superintendent's tone, glanced up to find Mr. and Mrs. Osborne and the two apprentice clerks still looking at him.

If he grasped the situation he did not show it. Quite pleasantly and naturally he excused himself and went out. A minute later he found Wickson seated at his desk in the office across the stockade.

"You're going to Fort Dease, Boynton," the superintendent began at once. "Be ready to start tomorrow morning."

CHAPTER IV

THE CHALLENGE

"THERE isn't any opposition there!" Phil exclaimed.

He had been so confident of getting Long Point post, of having an opportunity to show again what he could do, his only explanation of the superintendent's action was that a rival had unexpectedly chosen the isolated post for attack.

"No," Wickson replied, with ostensible significance. "There is no opposition at Fort Dease."

There was defiance, a challenge, in his eyes and bearing as he spoke. For a moment Phil returned the stare.

"I see," he said quietly. "It's still Penitentiary Post."

"It's a post that needs a manager at once, and you start tomorrow morning," snapped Wickson.

Phil did not reply. Quite coolly, a little contemptuously, he studied his superior. It irritated Wickson, and again he burst out:

"No Split Rock business this Winter, either, Boynton! I won't have a post in my district left without any one to handle it."

"I understand you perfectly," Phil said quietly. "It would never do to leave Fort Dease unprotected."

Because of the peculiar condition of

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affairs at Fort Dease, it was seldom visited by the Indians except in the Summer, and it was known throughout the fur land as the post where there was practically no work to do for nine months in the year.

But the irony of Phil's statement did not anger Wickson further. The superintendent realized the mistake he had made in not hiding his real reasons for sending an efficient man to an unimportant post.

"You'll have your hands full out there," he said in his usual tone. "Some Indian or other started conjuring or saw a weeteego. The whole band is stirred up and needs calming down."

But he did not deceive Phil, nor was the story of panicky Indians accepted as the truth.

"Very well," he said. "I'll be ready to start in two days."

"You start tomorrow morning!" Wickson commanded.

Still as cool as before, Phil stared straight into his superior's eyes.

"I think we understand each other perfectly," he said. "I'll be ready to start in two days."

He arose at once and walked out. Wickson watched him go without a word.

The young man who left the office was not the same who had entered it less than five minutes before. The careless, thoughtless, heedless boyishness was gone. Adolescence had been shed as if it were what in reality it was—a cloak long outgrown but which still fitted admirably.

The garment which took its place was even more comfortable, however. The big, tall, well-proportioned body had a better swing, a more confident carriage. The stride was quickened. The shoulders were set purposefully. The chin was at a new angle. A certain laughing light was gone from the eyes. Tightened muscles at the back of the jaw gave the cheeks an appearance of having suddenly flattened.

Wickson, as he watched from his office-window, caught something of this, but not much. He only smiled confidently as he saw Phil crossing to the dwelling-house and turned back to his desk. Patience is one of the great lessons the Northland teaches, and the superintendent had learned them all. What were two days, he thought, against the three hundred and sixty-five to follow?

Joyce Plummer, however, read all that Wickson had missed, and while it brought its first flash of joy, she knew instantly that something serious, possibly tragic, had caused the change.

She was alone in the living-room when he entered. Mrs. Osborne had dragged her husband away to tell him what she had read where he had been bewildered, and the two apprentice clerks, oppressed by the suspense-charged air, had retired to the bachelor quarters.

"What is it?" Joyce demanded as Phil stood smiling at her.

"Nothing at all," he insisted.

"But there is something. I know it. Every one knew it. What did he do?"

"He wanted me to start for my post tomorrow morning, and I merely told him I wouldn't be ready for two days."

"But why should he be in such a hurry? Long Point isn't far."

She flushed and then added quickly:

"Mrs. Osborne told me."

"Long Point isn't my post, I'm afraid," Phil said as lightly as he could. "Wickson has some one else for it."

"Not Long Point!" Joyce cried in bewilderment. "Why, he told Mr. Osborne he would send you there, not an hour after we arrived today. They all say you're just the man for it. Where will you go?"

"Fort Dease."

"You! Penitentiary Post!"

She stared at him in growing terror. Not for an instant did she doubt her senses. Things that had passed unnoticed flashed back with their true significance. Wickson's attentions at dinner, the sudden, curt command at the end of the meal, the strained silence that had followed the departure of the two for the office, each suddenly revealed its true significance.

"You! Penitentiary Post!" she repeated in a whisper.

Phil laughed. He had to laugh. It was the only thing he could do. In that short walk across the stockade from the office he had steeled himself not to speak to this girl of his love for her. He had determined to go away without a word, to wait until he had something besides a desolate hovel in a desolate land to offer her. He had suddenly realized that his love must find expression in success on his part before he could make it known. He had been brought up with a jerk by what he saw was his own unfitness.

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In such a land, with such a girl, it must be a man who offers himself, not a boy.

It was this thing that had changed Phil so completely, which had stiffened and hardened him, had made him realize his manhood and what it entailed. For the first time in his life he had found himself confronted with a responsibility. For the first time he knew that time is separated into three divisions whereas he had recognized only one. The present suddenly became dependent upon the future.

And so Phil laughed. Had he not laughed he would have swept her into his arms. He would have kissed the fear from her eyes. He would have whispered endearments into the ears he had just shocked with his announcement.

"It seems," he smiled, "that my services are not quite so valuable as I had thought."

But Joyce's expression did not change. She seemed not to have heard what he said.

"I can't forgive myself, Phil," she exclaimed. "I'm to blame for it all. It's my fault. I'd give anything if I could undo it, and you could have what you deserve."

Again he laughed, though this time there was a strain of joy in it that he could not down.

"Nonsense!" he protested. "I'm being punished for my little huff at Split Rock. Wickson and Borthwick are probably friends, and of course Borthwick hasn't forgiven me as I started the revolt that cost him his district."

"It's my fault," she repeated dully.

"You're mistaken entirely," Phil declared emphatically. "Wickson has just received word that the Indians have been all worked up by some conjuring business and may leave the district. He wants me to get out there as soon as possible and quiet them down."

"But Wickson doesn't believe those stories that have come from Fort Dease. He told Mr. Osborne so. He said this poor fellow had only become deranged because he couldn't stand the solitude. He doesn't think there is trouble there."

"Perhaps he has had later advices. I think so, from what he said."

"But Mrs. Osborne told me no other word had been received from Fort Dease since the first of last Winter."

"You're not accustomed to post rumors and don't know how to discount them," laughed Phil. "People have nothing to do but let their imaginations run riot."

But Joyce was stubborn, stubborn with the assurance that she was right. And she was face to face with the North country, the land of terrific distances, of wordless Winters, of fear-breeding uncertainty. She knew why Phil was being sent to this distant, desolate spot. She knew there would be no word from him for a year. The story of the former manager, brought out a babbling idiot, was still fresh and haunting. Her canoe journey had given her a glimpse of the grim, forbidding nature of the North, of its silent, oppressive malevolence.

Fort Dease—Penitentiary Post—had become the incarnation of all that was mysterious and repellant in a land that mystified and repelled. To Joyce it had come to typify the wide, lifeless, sullen wastes, the dark ominous, courage-gnawing Winters, the hunger and the cold and the loneliness which only the North can cause. To her, too, it was the fount of all that was dim and uncertain and shadowy. It was the source of terrors and terrifying things.

She was suddenly overwhelmed with the dread of it. She forgot where she was, forgot that Phil had never spoken a word of love, forgot everything except the one fact that he was going to this place where anything might happen.

"Phil! Phil!" she cried. "You can't go there!"

She stepped closer, grasped his coat with both hands, her face turned just beneath his. Her eyes pleaded, told of her fear, but they made known also the love which prompted her action.

For a moment Phil stood resolute, fighting his desire and the weakness that had seized him. Then as a torrent that will not be denied by the strongest barrier man can build, his longing overcame all else, and he threw his arms around her.

"Sweetheart!" he whispered in a strange, husky voice.

For a time they clung to each other. They did not speak. They did not even think. Fort Dease, the future, nothing mattered, Wickson was forgotten, the separation they faced, the uncertainty of everything. Love had gripped them, had filled their hearts and their minds.

Joyce was the first to speak.

"I'll be brave," she whispered. "But, dear, I don't want you to go."

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"It's only for a year," he assured her. "I'll ask for a transfer from this district next Summer, and when we go we'll go together."

"But this year! Fort Dease!"

"I don't dread that in the least. I've been through worse than Penitentiary Post."

"But there is something the matter, something terrible there."

"Just imagination. Spirits don't visit Fort Dease any more than they haunt Trafalgar Square. Only, dear, I don't like to leave you here."

"Don't worry about me!" Joyce exclaimed fiercely. "I know what you mean. But nothing can happen. I'm yours, dearest, only yours."

TWO days later Phil left Savant House for Fort Dease. Two Indians were to paddle him to a post two hundred miles to the east. There, two more would take him another hundred miles to an outpost, where another relay of canoemen would take him on to Fort Dease. In this way each pair of paddlers would have time to return before the first ice of Winter should catch them.

For Phil it was unlike any other journey he had ever taken in the Northland. He had books, but he did not read as the men drove the canoe up-stream or across lakes. For hours at a time he would lie back on his blankets. Usually only rosy dreams came, but always there was present a dread of what the year might bring, a dread of Wickson.

He had not meant to speak to Joyce. He was a little ashamed of himself for having given way to a sudden impulse. He felt that he had had no right to speak. His future was uncertain. He was in debt to the Company for half a year's salary. For years he might be shunted about from one remote post to another. He really had nothing to offer, and he had no right to ask Joyce to share the uncertainty of his future.

Phil spent one night only at his first stopping-place. Lowry, the post-manager, tried to induce him to remain at least a week.

"Wickson will never know," he urged. "He's a fox to find out everything that goes on in his district, but what if he does?"

But Phil had determined to go on as quickly as possible. A week before he would have remained two weeks, taking his chances on getting to Fort Dease before ice stopped the canoe. Now, in his suddenly awakened manhood, he was intent only on reaching his work. He intended to conduct the business of his post as though it were the most important in the district instead of the least important in fur land. He would not leave Wickson a loophole for complaint or reprimand. Henceforth his record was to be irreproachable, one that would compel attention. Something other than loyalty to the Company was forcing him now.

Phil's dread of Wickson, or, rather, of what Wickson might do, drove him to discreet inquiries, however. Lowry knew the superintendent well and was a willing talker.

"It's Company first with him, always," he said. "He's worse than an old-timer because his father and his grandfather were old-timers. He's as much of this country as any Indian. The Company's regulations are the only Bible he knows. I suppose it takes generations to breed the supreme devotion to the H. B. C. that Wickson has."

"It's too bad it doesn't breed brains as well!" Phil exploded despite himself.

Lowry laughed.

"Think you're too good for Penitentiary Post, eh? Well, I'll tell you, Boynton. You started something last Winter and Wickson probably thinks it's his duty to let you down for it. No, Wickson would send his own brother to Dease if he thought he should be sent there. There's only one thing I ever expect to see upset Wickson and that's a woman. It never has yet. He has never had the time, or the opportunity. Probably never happened to think of them.

"But he's that kind. I don't mean he'd be a devil with women. There's a queer streak in Wickson. He's pretty much of a savage and hard and reckless. He'd be square with them. No caveman about him if he does lack varnish. But he'd be invincible, too. I'd like to watch him. I know what his methods would be."

Early the next morning Phil went on, two new Indians paddling him. The two who returned to Savant House carried a long letter to Joyce. It was the third Phil had written after Lowry had gone to bed. He could not keep his fear of Wickson from the first two.

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THAT same morning Joyce had been romping about the stockade with the Osborne children. At last the older ones had run off with some Indian youngsters, leaving the little girl with their teacher. Joyce had sat in the shade of the dwelling-house, telling stories, until the kiddy went to sleep in her arms. Fearful of awakening it, she sat there in silence near the open living-room window.

After a time she heard Mrs. Osborne enter the room and sit down at her sewing-table. A few minutes later Osborne joined her.

"I guess there's something in that Fort Dease business after all," he began at once. "I was talking this morning with old Joe. He's pretty sensible about all this Indian conjuring business and the weeteego nonsense and he says he's sure there's something behind the stories those Fort Dease Indians told while they were here. He says it's something more than imagination, and something more than spirits, that drove the post-manager out of his head. If he believed like the other Indians, he told me, he'd think it was a weeteego, but he says a weeteego seldom leaves tracks, and whatever has been haunting Fort Dease left a trail unlike anything ever seen before."

CHAPTER V

PENITENTIARY POST

FORT DEASE stands in the center of the newest, rawest land on the globe. The rare geologists who have seen it call it "juvenile," "immature." The few white men who have visited it never willingly return to it.

Only yesterday, as the earth measures time, this land lay under the sea. Only last night it raised above the surface, bare, flat, brine-dripping, sodden. Today it stands as the last reminder of what an unspeakably repellant place our earth was an astral month ago.

Bordering an empty inland sea more than three times as large as all the great lakes combined, it vies with the waste of water in emptiness but bows to it in diversity. The sea is a thing of many moods, raging, inviting, restless, uncertain. The land is unchangeably sullen, unimaginably dreary. It only broods.

It is empty of every living thing. In the same latitude as the latest world garden in the West, it lies barren and void. As far as the eye can see from the shore there are only marshes and gravel stretches, desolate plains of coarse grass and sedge. When the tide goes out it leaves a great, ugly expanse of boulder-strewn mud.

Far back from the inland sea little trees began a fight which they seem to have abandoned as soon as they had lifted their heads high enough to know what had given them birth. Stunted, unnatural spruce and larch, they serve only to add to the desolate aspect.

A few ptarmigan live in the low shelter of this puny forest. Otherwise, except on its western and southern borders, the land is too inhospitable even for those animals which thrive a thousand miles nearer the Arctic.

No Indians live in it. One hundred and fifty miles back from the inland ocean they struggled through an uncertain Winter, always facing starvation, always dependent upon the two or three forts such as Dease. Without the Hudson's Bay Company the land would be absolutely tenantless, and even its efforts seem pitifully weak in the face of the dreary, desolate dawn of an azoic waste.

Rivers thread this land, rough, raw, rushing streams that have scarred the surface with their newly cut banks of clay. They wander in places, as if seeking a river's natural heritage, a valley, only to mingle with the tide at last without ever having attained individuality.

The streams, the forest, the marshes, the flat shore, the ugly tide wastes, all contribute to the monotony and the rawness and the horrible emptiness. It is not a land God forgot or shunned. It is a land He never saw.

Into the center of it came Philip Boynton. He had not seen it before, but he had seen others nearly as bad, and it did not oppress him. There were other things of more importance in Phil's life than his physical surroundings, other things that demanded all his free moments, and luckily for him there was little time for brooding over the dreariness that came from within.

More than forty Indian hunters and their families were camped about the fort, nearly one hundred and fifty in all, and each dependent upon Phil and the Company for the means of living through the Winter. They

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were silent, sullen, restless, as men might be when they face famine and the quick Winter. It was long past the usual time of departure for their hunting-grounds far back from the sea, and they were anxious to be away before the ice caught them.

Supplies for Fort Dease were brought down the coast in a sailboat from Fort Berens, whence they had been sent by the same method from the great depot beyond. It is the duty of the Fort Dease manager to make this annual, precarious trip to Fort Berens but Phil's predecessor had not been able to do so and the work had been done by the Fort Berens manager. He had supervised the transportation, had seen that the goods were stored properly and then had departed, leaving a half-breed, Sandy Thunder, in charge.

Sandy, who had long been the manager's sole servant at Fort Dease, had instructions to wait until a certain time for the arrival of a new manager from Savant House. If he had not arrived, Sandy was to fit out the hunters and send them off to their districts.

Phil arrived two days before this specified time and of necessity he plunged at once into the work of outfitting the Indians. He had little leisure to study his hunters, either while he traded with them or through that cold record of the Indian's character, the fort journal. This is so kept that each succeeding manager may learn how reliable each hunter is, how industrious, and how much debt he should be granted.

But, before he passed a pound of supplies over the counter, Phil performed that duty of all managers to themselves in isolated posts. He selected several months' provisions for two, measuring generously, and set them aside, to be placed in a cache away from the buildings. Hudson's Bay Company men reduce so far as possible the chance of being left to starve as a result of fire.

In three days the last of the Indians had received his debt. Phil worked so hard and so rapidly he did not realize the unusual speed with which they left the fort. He rushed them through so quickly he had no time for gossip, that greatest source of a post-manager's information as to conditions in his territory. He was too busy even to notice the uneasiness of the men, the nervous manner of the women, or the frightened, shifting glances of the children.

With Sandy to assist him, he worked from early in the morning until late at night, and even from the half-breed he failed to obtain a hint as to the state of mind of his hunters. He only knew that they had far to travel and that time was short. Each must track his load up swift rivers, pushing through matted willows on the banks, and even then many might not reach their hunting-grounds before the ice barred their highways.

The morning of the fourth day Phil had his first opportunity to inspect the place that was to be his home for a year. The fort was built at the mouth of Cut-Bank River. The stream ran twenty feet below the buildings, which were set on the dead level of all the country.

Over the land as over the sea the view was unobstructed, without change. Southeast and northwest the shore stretched interminably, monotonously. Twice each day it thrust itself far out in pursuit of the receding tide, only to retreat as often. Back of the shore was the same unchangeable view, a country perfectly flat, perfectly bare except for the coarse grass and sedge. Still farther back, at the limit of vision, was a thin, black line, the beginning of the stunted timber.

The buildings, as at most posts since the stockade has become unnecessary, were inclosed in the usual picket fence. They did not differ from those of any small post except in size, a fact readily explained by one sweep of the eye around the treeless horizon. It had been necessary to bring the building timber more than one hundred miles down the Cut-Bank in rafts, and logs were too valuable to be wasted.

There was a dwelling-house, a small, square, one-story building made of logs and sheathed outside with whipsawed siding. There was the trading-shop, the warehouse and the servants' house. Outside the fence stood the inevitable Indian house. Back of the trading-shop was a small, low dog-house, and that was all.

Inside the fence and out the ground was packed hard in dry weather or a mess of sticky clay in wet. Grass grew in patches. Paths led here and there, paths that dwindled out despondently in the bog.

Phil's house was divided into four rooms. The front door opened upon a hall which led back to the kitchen. The other corner at the rear was occupied by the dining-room. In the front of the hall doors opened into

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Phil's bedroom on the left and the living-room on the right.

Sandy Thunder slept in the kitchen. The servants' house had long been unoccupied. Sandy had been the only servant, and, with the manager, had constituted the sole population. He did the cooking, the chores and the few odd jobs necessary. Generally he sat beside his cook-stove and smoked a pipe for hours at a time.

"WELL, Sandy," Phil said the first night they were alone together and the half-breed was serving his supper, "the hunters have gone and mighty glad they seemed to get away, too. It isn't going to freeze hard for a couple of weeks, is it?"

"Most often next month, early," Sandy answered.

"I thought so. But an Indian always wants to be certain. Anyhow, they can't kick about being late. They'll make it, but you would have thought it was going to freeze tomorrow the way they got out as soon as they received their debt."

"It not the ice that makes them hurry. It the weeteego."

"Nonsense!" Phil was about to exclaim, but a quick look told him that Sandy believed implicitly in the evil spirit.

"I'll have to look into the weeteego business," he said soberly. "The Company can't have its hunters driven away. I'll take care of this thing before the Indians come back again."

Sandy glanced uneasily at his master. Phil had spoken confidently, and many white men had powers Indians could not attain, especially Company men.

"This a bad weeteego," he offered. "He travel like the wind. Today he be here. Tomorrow he be way off."

"Do you really believe there is a weeteego, Sandy?"

"Me know it," was the ready, confident reply.

"You haven't seen him?"

"Me hear him."

"Sure it wasn't the wind?"

"The wind no make noise like a gun."

"But an Indian might have fired the gun."

"Over there," and Sandy swept his arm toward the great bog to the south, "no Indian ever go. Last Fall after hunters are all gone, just at dark, me hear gun over there. That the weeteego."

It was only a confirmation that the man had been misled by his imagination, but Phil had always been interested in this strange superstition common to northern Indians and he saw in it not only a chance to accomplish something worth while in the interests of the Company but entertainment as well.

"But, Sandy," he protested, "how can a weeteego shoot a real gun that makes a real noise?"

"A weeteego he do anything," was the solemn reply.

"But you haven't heard anything except this gun?"

"That man here last year, you no see him go out?" Sandy countered.

"No, he left Savant House before I got there."

"He see the weeteego."

Phil kept a straight countenance with difficulty.

"Where?" he asked.

"In this house. The weeteego open the door to his room and look in. Not once but many times. That man he sleep with a gun beside him all the time.

"What do you do, Sandy?"

"Me lock the door with the bar and keep a knife always sharp. But the weeteego never come near me. Only the other room."

"Well, get the supper on the table, Sandy, and I'll think over this business. I've got some bad medicine for weeteegos."

But Phil didn't think over the weeteego business. It didn't bother him, any more than a child's stories of ghosts would have given him the creeps. After supper he sat in the living-room, trying to read. But always a face appeared on each page, a face that grew in distinctness until the type was blotted out, and at last he laid down the book.

Outside a cold, raw Fall storm was on. Rain pelted against the building and fell in sheets from the eaves. The wind, unobstructed for scores and scores of miles, rattled loose boards in the siding and seemed at times strong enough to lift the house and hurl it into the river. Mingled with it was the noise of the surf on the beach.

At last Phil went to bed. Joyce and Wickson and what Lowry had told him of the superintendent, these were far more important than Indian superstitions, and he dropped off to sleep without another thought of the weeteego.

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He wakened early. Sandy evidently was not up. So Phil lay in bed as had long been his custom. There is no reason why lonely post-managers should keep energetic hours. At last he heard his servant rattling the stove lids and moving about in the preparation of the morning meal. When he judged that it was about ready he got up and dressed.

Still lazily, for he had all Winter in which to do what little work lay before him, Phil went out after breakfast and strolled down the shore past the Indian house. The sky had cleared and the sun was an hour out of the sea.

He was watching the sun, the only pleasant thing to be seen in all the desolate vastness about him, and it was not until he splashed into a puddle that he saw where he was going.

His course had taken him into the bare, smooth spot where the Indians had camped, just beyond the Indian house. And as he looked at the ground he stopped, startled. Before him, molded firmly, clearly, unmistakably, in the mud, was the print of a human foot. Not moccasined nor shod in any skin or rubber, but bare, naked, with little ridges where the soft clay had pressed up between the toes.

For a moment Phil stared at the track. Then he followed it on across the camping-grounds until it was lost in the bog beyond. He returned, back-tracking, and found that the maker of the prints had come from the Indian house.

"Sandy," Phil muttered to himself, "and deucedly cold to be trotting around in his bare feet, too."

Quite casually, he opened the subject with Sandy an hour later.

"Walking around for the fun of it in that rain last night?" he asked.

"Me no go out last night."

"Or this morning?"

Sandy shook his head.

"When it is dark me stay in," he declared stoutly.

"Come, Sandy, you're not afraid of this weeteego."

The half-breed shook his head uncertainly.

"Me hear him last night," he said. "He holler like a wolf, off there in the bog. It wake me up in the middle of the night."

"You think he was here last night?"

"Me hear him."

"But it might have been the wind."

Sandy went to the kitchen window and beckoned to Phil to follow. Silently he pointed out at the soft, glistening clay.

Leading up to the window and then away from it were tracks made by bare, naked feet.

CHAPTER VI

THE SPECTER OF FORT DEASE

THAT day Phil and Sandy spent building a cache for their emergency supply of food. Sandy did not speak of the weeteego again. Phil thought of the strange tracks several times. The most reasonable explanation was that one of the Indians had lingered after the others or returned for something he had forgotten.

Only the fact that the feet were bare and that the tracks led up to the window perplexed him. Curiosity in the new head of the post might have prompted a peep through the window. But it was unnatural for an Indian to have done so when his tracks would show so plainly. Neither was it natural for one to go barefoot. Indians are always shod and not even the hardiest of them would wander about on so raw a night in his naked feet. Phil resolved to keep the incident in mind. Perhaps he could find in later developments some explanation of the mysterious visit.

"We put the gunpowder in the cache, too?" asked Sandy after Phil had set aside the provisions.

"Why gunpowder?"

"We always do at this fort. One keg. Then if anything happens to the trading shop, fire maybe, there is gunpowder for the Indians."

Phil saw the wisdom of the plan at once. Indians in the Fort Dease district depend almost entirely on gunpowder for their Winter's food. They take a little pork with them when they leave in the Fall, and some sugar and tea. Almost never do they take flour. But powder for their trade guns is an imperative necessity.

"Yes," he told Sandy, "put in a keg. It will be easy enough to get it if we need it."

For a week Phil found occupation in going over the stock in the trading shop, getting his books up to date and rearranging goods on the shelves. Another week was spent in directing Sandy through a thorough housecleaning job, one that

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evidently had been neglected since the Fall before.

Phil himself did a great deal of manual labor. He had discovered in those first three days of strenuous work outfitting the Indians that he slept better and there was less time for thinking. Thinking had come to mean only one thing—Joyce and Wickson. They were always ready to leap to the front whenever idleness permitted. In the long journey from Savant House, and especially after he had left Lowry, he had threshed out the whole question. He had approached the subject from every angle. He had convinced himself of the loyalty of Joyce. He knew her love was not a flash in the pan but something that would endure.

He had weighed Wickson carefully and had come to the certain conclusion that he need not fear the superintendent. The man had force, determination, brains. He was a big, strong, conquering Northman. But he would be honest with Joyce if he had not been with Phil, and treachery at least was not to be thought of.

Phil knew, too, that Wickson started with the handicap of having sent him to Fort Dease. It had aroused Joyce against him, had brought her contempt. As the year wore on and she thought of him out there alone in a lifeless world, she would come to loathe the cause of his being there.

These had been Phil's sane conclusions on his canoe journey to Dease. Fresh from Joyce's presence, still feeling her last caress, still in the ecstasy of that last moment together, it was only natural that, even in the face of a year's separation, he should look forward with assurance to their reunion the following Summer. As he lay back in the canoe, looking up at the sky or with his eyes closed, he dreamed jubilantly.

Now, in a brooding, oppressive land, Phil began to brood and to become oppressed. Winter was coming to envelop the paleozoic swamp in which he lived, coming to make it even more repellent, more monotonous. He had reached the days of inevitable inactivity, the days that were to be endless, always the same. More and more his thoughts dwelt upon Joyce, and upon Wickson. His first misgivings came, not doubts of Joyce herself but of her ability to win in the fight she must make. He became self-condemnatory. He had no right to speak to her when he did. He should have waited. He should not have asked her to endure what Wickson's jealous love would cause her to endure.

His attitude toward Wickson underwent a gradual change. He began to suspect that the superintendent was capable of anything. Despite what Lowry had said of the man, Phil's imagination painted him with lurid, horrible colors. What had been contempt became hatred, a hatred not unmixed with fear, and a sullen resentment grew daily until it obsessed him.

These things drove out all thought of the weeteego, all recollections of the footprints in the mud that first week in spite of Sandy's morose fancies. For a time Phil had cultivated Sandy. To him there had been no distinction between master and servant, between the white race and a mixture of two races. Out there at Fort Dease, alone together, facing an interminable Winter with no other companionship, why should a little matter of color or birth be a barrier?

Then, too, Phil had always been interested in Indians and in their languages, superstitions and psychology. In more than one lonely post he had found native and half-breed servants fertile sources of amusement and information. He rattled off Cree and Ojibway and Chippewayan and Beaver and was the proud possessor of one of those priceless Bishop Baraga Ojibway dictionaries.

Then, too, it is through his Indian servants that a post-manager keeps informed as to the state of affairs in his domain. Indians talk among themselves as they will not talk to white people, even to representatives of that Company which they call in their own language, "to whom we owe thanks." And Indians are as social as white people. They love to gossip, to talk scandal, to hash over the latest sensation. Gradually this talk creeps back to the post-manager and he knows, if he is wise and patient and diplomatic, everything that is going on in the territory for which he is responsible.

And so in the first weeks Phil spent long hours talking to Sandy. He learned the characteristics of every hunter who traded at Fort Dease. He learned the customs and ways of the post, of the people who made it their headquarters. He gathered and stowed away innumerable bits of scandal and practical jokes, of prowess on the part of this hunter and laziness on the part of another.

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He learned how Henry Chapies had caught two black foxes on the same day and had celebrated by refusing to set another trap all Winter. He learned that Job Mecham was supposed to have fits and spend an entire Winter moping in his camp, while the next year he would go out and liquidate two seasons' debt with a phenomenal catch of fur.

He learned how, two Winters before, Solomon Moses and his entire family had starved to death through the inability of the Fort Dease manager and Sandy to get relief to them in time. Word had been brought in and, as the Company always does, relief had been dispatched as quickly as possible.

Sandy went into a long description of that trip, of how he was caught in the worst storm he had ever known, of how he had become lost in trying to make a short-cut between Cut-Bank and Berens Rivers and of how he had arrived too late and had found the family lying dead in the camp, with the exception of Solomon Moses himself, who had probably gone off in search of help and died on the way.

AFTER several weeks Sandy finally loosened enough to give the information that the Indians would never return to Fort Dease to dispose of their Winter's hunt.

"You're crazy," Phil exclaimed.

"You wait and see."

"But why shouldn't they come back?"

"The weeteego."

"The weeteego won't keep them away from here in the Spring."

"Way up the Bay there a new post, a Free-trading company. No weeteego there. In the Spring all the Indians cross over and go down the White Wolf River to that post and sell their fur. They 'fraid to come back here."

"But why did they get their debt here this Fall if they are afraid of the weeteego?"

"They have to have powder and everything and in the Summer they not so afraid of the weeteego because they had not heard much about it and it not come here before when the Indians are here."

"How do you know they'll take their fur down the Bay?"

"They all talk about it while they wait for you to come."

In spite of the earnestness of the half-breed, Phil did not have much faith in Sandy's story. He had not seen evidences of unusual unrest among the Indians. And these Indians had never known a Free-trader, had never dealt with any one except the Hudson's Bay Company. The story was preposterous.

When Phil believed he had soaked in all the gossip of the district he failed to find Sandy particularly entertaining. The half-breed was too prone to wander into the realms of superstition, altogether too fond of telling of the weeteego that had been visiting Fort Dease and that had driven the former manager mad.

As at the beginning, Phil did not attach any importance to this story. He had disposed of the strange footprints in the mud with the explanation that an Indian had returned for something he had forgotten. It was only the morning before that the last of them had gone.

"I know," Sandy had concluded his tale one night, "white men never believe in weeteego. But the manager who was here last year, he believe. He see the weeteego, not once but many time. He know this weeteego come to Fort Dease. The weeteego make him mad, like a loon."

And so Phil had come to abandon Sandy to his pipe and his kitchen and his fear of the weeteego. He had retired to the front of the dwelling-house, to his broodings and his fears and his doubts, and the beginning of Winter found him mooning alone in the living-room while Sandy smoked his pipe and mooned over weeteegos in the kitchen.

It was one morning in early November, when the bogs had frozen over and the first big snow was threatening, that Sandy violated a precedent and entered the living-room one morning.

"That keg of gunpowder in the cache, she gone!" he exclaimed excitedly.

"What did you do with it?" asked Phil disinterestedly.

"Me never go near that cache."

"But there is no one else to go near it."

"It the weeteego."

"Weeteego nonsense! Weeteegos don't steal gunpowder."

"Come and you see."

Phil followed Sandy out to the corner of the enclosure where the cache had been built. Several yards away he saw that one side had been broken into and he hurried forward. The gunpowder was gone.

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Phil stood up after a quick examination and looked at Sandy.

"When did this happen?" he asked.

"It all here last night. Me feed the dogs and see the cache."

"You haven't seen any more of those barefoot tracks?"

Sandy pointed to the frozen clay and shrugged his shoulders.

"Me hear him again last night," he said. "He howl like a wolf off there," and he pointed toward the marsh in the south.

Phil's investigations of Indian superstitions had led to a discovery, not original with him, that the legend of, or belief in, the *loup-garou*, or werewolf, was common among some Indians, as it had been among many primitive people. He knew that the Eskimo of Alaska believes that the killer whale, "the wolf of the sea," has the ability to change at will into the wolf, and vice versa.

But as he went back to the house, scoffing, he realized that, despite anything he might believe, the gunpowder was gone.

"Me put another keg there?" Sandy asked.

"No," Phil answered gruffly. "We'll keep the rest in the store."

From that time on the weeteego began to take its place in Phil's thoughts with Joyce and Wickson. Viewed now at a distance, the tracks of naked feet in the mud assumed a sinister significance. And the gunpowder was gone. No living person was known to be within one hundred or one hundred and fifty miles of Fort Dease.

THE week after the disappearance of the gunpowder the first big storm of the Winter struck the coast. For a day it raged without a lull. When night came, nothing was to be seen from the dwelling-house windows beyond the picket fence. The great, barren waste was a mass of flying snow, and the first numbing cold had come. The little house shook as it received the full force of the wind and the eaves formed great whistles which shrieked eerily with each rising blast.

The storm had brought with it excessive brooding and a new despondency, and Phil went to bed early, tired out by the very wretchedness and suspense and gnawing uncertainty of his existence. He would not have admitted it, he probably did not realize it, but the land, that new, raw, barren waste, had gripped him. Aided by the forces that attacked from within, it had at last penetrated the callousness built up by a dozen years in the wilderness.

Phil did not know when he wakened or what had caused him to be transferred so suddenly from a dreamless sleep to a complete, alert consciousness. The sounds of the storm were even louder, but in the room there was absolute quiet. It was dark, too, so dark that even the window could hardly be distinguished.

For a moment Phil strained his eyes, so certain had he been that something had wakened him. When he knew that he could not see he listened intently, as if to hear something beneath the roar of the storm.

But there was nothing except perfect stillness in the room. Phil relaxed at last, concluding that an unusual blast of wind had shaken the house and disturbed him. He thought to drop off to sleep, but found his nerves peculiarly tense. He found, too, that he was unconsciously straining his ears.

A particularly fierce gust struck the house but even in the rattle and roar there came to him under it all a sound that could have been made by only one thing. The latch of the door was being lifted. The shrieking of the wind and the rattling of loose boards ceased and in the momentary stillness Phil strained to catch a repetition of the sound. There was none.

Again the wind struck the house, and again Phil caught the sound of a lifting latch. This time there mingled with it a tiny squeak as the door turned on the hinges.

"Sandy!" Phil cried as he sprang from bed. "What are you doing there?"

He ran across the room and found the door open a couple of inches. As he grasped the latch he heard the front door open, and when he had swung back the door of his own room the storm struck him, blinding and driving him back with the sting of the snow and the searing cold.

"Sandy!" he called again, now pressing against the wind and looking out. He thought he caught a glimpse of a figure on the veranda but if he did it faded instantly into the darkness and the storm.

"Sandy!"

There was no answer and he closed the outer door and went into his room. Shivering, trembling so he could hardly hold the

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chimney of the lamp, for the cold had struck through, he finally struck a light. Then, the lamp in his hand, he went to the kitchen.

As he entered the hall the lamp showed at once that the kitchen door was open. He had never known the half-breed to leave it so.

"Sandy!" he called as he strode down the hall.

There was no answer, but as the lamp lighted up the kitchen Phil saw his servant's horror-distorted face peering out from under the blankets on his bunk.

"What are you doing up at this time of night, opening my door and the front door?" Phil demanded angrily.

The man did not answer.

"Wasn't that you?" Phil asked as a twinge of the other's terror touched him.

Still Sandy seemed incapable of speech, and Phil crossed over to his bunk.

"Haven't you been out of bed?"

Sandy shook his head.

"Who was that at my door, if it wasn't you?"

"The weeteego," whispered the half-breed.

"Weeteego!"

"You no see him?"

"Of course not."

"Me see him. Here, in the kitchen. He open that door. Me see him by the window. He hit that bench with his foot. Then he go back through the hall. Me never see him before."

Phil did not comment. Slowly he turned and set the lamp on the table. There had been the quick impulse to scoff, but somehow the words would not come. He knew that Sandy had not been out of bed. He was not sure that he had only imagined a figure just outside the front door, one that had faded into the storm as a picture fades from a screen at a moving-picture show.

He turned uncertainly and looked at the frightened face of the half-breed. Then he picked up his lamp and without another word returned to his bedroom.

Cursing himself for permitting Indian superstition and a half-breed's terror to upset him, and at the same time glancing furtively over his shoulder at the door of his room, Phil crawled in between the big four-point blankets. For a time he found himself listening intently every time the wind howled. It had been only then that he had heard the noise of the lifted latch. But after a half-hour he had argued himself into a firm belief that both he and Sandy had been the victims of a caprice, or series of caprices, of the storm.

The fright, for it had been that, served to clear Phil's brain. It raised it above the muddy, murky, befogging level to which it had been sinking. Brooding, inactivity, growing fears and anxieties for Joyce, the depressing effects of solitude and of the land in which he lived, all had combined to rob him of mental vigor. Now he was alert, sane again, and for the first time in weeks his old humorous attitude toward life returned. With a frank grin for his terror of a half-hour before, he turned over and went to sleep.

Daylight had come when Phil wakened again, a fact that brought him up in bed with a jerk. He had been breakfasting by lamplight for a month. He listened for sounds in the kitchen but there were none. The storm still tore across the bogs and the sea still whistled and rattled about the dwelling-house. The house was very cold. Sandy always had a fire roaring in the living-room that his master might have a warm place in which to dress. Phil crossed the hall, but the stove was cold and silent.

"Sandy!" he called as he started through the dining-room to the kitchen. "Sandy, where are you?"

There was no answer and he threw open the kitchen door to find that room as still and as cold as the others. There was no fire in the stove, and Sandy's bed was empty. Even the blankets were gone.

The cold decided Phil's next move as he stood there perplexed. He ran back through the hall to his own room to get his clothes. Ten minutes later he was bundled in his skins and furs and working at the stove with numbed fingers. When the fire was burning well in the living-room and he had warmed himself, he went to the kitchen and threw open the outer door.

A great mass of snow was banked up against it, packed so tightly by the wind that it remained there, a solid, finely chiseled barrier showing each little crevice in the boards against which it has been driven.

Phil closed the door against the wind and ran through the hall to the front door. It was barricaded in the same way. Sandy had gone, and he had gone in the night, so

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long ago that the storm had wiped out all traces of where he had passed through the door.

Returning to the kitchen, Phil again opened the door and stepped out into the big drift. He fought his way across to the trading shop, to the warehouse and back to the dog kennel. The dogs were gone.

He went out through the gate in the picket fence to the Indian house. The door was closed, and the snow was banked high on the threshold. But when Phil opened it and looked in he saw that it had been opened in the night and snow tracked in, leaving great, unshapely prints on the floor.

He hurried back through the drifts to the front gate in the fence and then across to the opposite side gate. In no place was there a sign of any one having gone out. The storm had attended to that. Then he returned to the kitchen door and saw that his own tracks had been nearly filled.

Sandy, with the only dog team, had gone, and in the storm there was no way to follow him. Phil was alone at Fort Dease at the beginning of Winter.

CHAPTER VII

THE WEETEEGO

THE WEETEEGO—weeteego in Cree, windigo in Ojibway—is not exactly a superstition among woods Indians. There have been weeteegos, and windigos, and the few actual instances have served to establish firmly a belief in them.

The weeteego is not from the spirit world. He is a real, live Indian, either man or woman, who has obtained supernatural powers through some means or other, and who is to be greatly feared as no human force can prevail against him.

Further, and more gruesomely, the weeteego, or windigo, is a cannibal, an ogre of the wilderness that eats men, women and children. This is its most fear-inspiring trait, but, through its supernatural powers, it is capable of any diabolical act.

Real, live weeteegos, of course, have been mentally deranged Indians who have killed and eaten members of their own families or other Indians. Insanity is often misconstrued by woods Indians as an evidence of the possession of evil spirits, and the common belief in the power of such spirits, coupled with the few real instances of weeteegoism, has resulted in more than one panic-disrupted camp.

Philip Boynton knew all of this. He had heard much of it and one actual instance had come under his observation. He knew the terror of the Indians when they believe a weeteego is near their camp, and he understood perfectly why Sandy had gone.

Phil felt only exasperation. There was no fear, no dread of what he faced. The shock of finding himself alone cleared his mind of the bloated, distorted, inflamed thoughts and he was cool, thoroughly himself again. He cursed because he faced a Winter of his own cooking. He laughed at the thought of himself, a much-served servant of the great Company, cutting his own firewood. Half grinning, half frowning, he went into the kitchen to prepare his breakfast.

The snow ceased falling at noon and the sky cleared. Phil went out again to try to determine what Sandy had done. He found that the half-breed had taken the toboggan, the dogs, his snow-shoes, his blankets and rabbit-skin robes, four sacks of fish for the team and practically all the food in the kitchen—enough to last him two weeks.

There was nothing to indicate which way he had gone. It might have been northwest to Fort Berens. It might have been south to some hunter's camp across the bogs. It might have been up the river to Lowry's nearest outpost. It might have been up the coast to the Free-trader of whom he had told.

Of all these places, Fort Berens was the nearest, nearly two hundred miles down the shore of the Bay, a difficult, dangerous trip, with no fuel, no protection from storms. Southwest to the Free-trader's it was the same. The chances were he had gone west toward the timber country and the nearest outpost of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Phil did not find anything hopeful in this. He knew that by the time Sandy had broken a trail for two hundred miles he would have the superstitious fear pretty well worked out of his system and, because of his white blood, would be ashamed to admit the reason for his flight from Fort Dease. He might even avoid the Hudson's Bay Company altogether.

The more he thought of it the more he was convinced that the last would be the case. On that hypothesis he reasoned out

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his own predicament. If Sandy failed to tell that he was alone at Fort Dease the fact would not be known all Winter. He even stopped to wonder if Wickson would act if he did learn of it. The superintendent might ignore the fact, leave him to a year of solitude. It would be playing his game, although the Company's policy never willingly permitted such a thing.

There would be an opportunity to send out a message in January. At most posts all the hunters gather on New Year's Day. It is an annual affair, the big occasion of the year. They bring in the first of the Winter's fur, get new supplies, and, best of all, are guests of the Company, eat the Company's food and shake the hand of the Company's representative. It is the bright spot in the Indian's Winter.

But Fort Dease was different. Down there on the shore of the Bay, separated from the hunting-grounds by one hundred and fifty miles of barren waste, it was too far for all its hunters to come in Midwinter. Sandy had told Phil that in past years only a dozen were near enough, and cared enough, to make the journey. Phil remembered too, what Sandy had said about the hunters not coming back to Fort Dease because of the weeteego, but he gave the report no consideration. Of course the Indians would come, and in six weeks he would have one of them started for Lowry's post with a message. In three months he would have a servant, a dog-team and perhaps some mail.

So, in excellent spirits, Phil began his long solitude. It was even better, he thought, than to have Sandy mooning in the kitchen over weeteegos, and, besides, Sandy's bannock was far below standard.

As for the weeteego, Phil ignored it. He convinced himself that the wind had played a prank, and Sandy, because the manager had been disturbed, imagined all that was necessary to reach the climax of superstitious terror.

For a week things went nicely. The flight of his servant seemed to have lifted Phil above the despondency caused by the dreary life at Fort Dease and by his brooding over Joyce and Wickson. He found enough to keep him busy most of the day and he had brought in a large supply of books from the library at Savant House. He thought much of Joyce, but Wickson occupied less of his attention and his pessimism was gone.

THEN, ten days after Sandy left, and as Phil sat reading one night, he was startled from his chair by a howl from out on the bog. His book slid to the floor and he half rose from his chair.

It was seldom that wolves came near Fort Dease. There was nothing for them to live on. But, though this fact flashed instantly into Phil's mind, it was something else that kept him in a tense attitude of perplexity and uneasiness. He had heard thousands of wolves howl, but he had never heard one exactly like that. As he tried to reproduce the sound in his mind he became more certain that it could not have been a wolf.

But he knew of nothing else it could have been. There was not a person within one hundred and fifty miles of him. Alone, he was out on the edge of as desolate a land as the world knew. On one side was the inland sea, an impossible thoroughfare. On the other was a storm-swept, shelterless waste, as barren of life as the moon.

The sound was not repeated and slowly Phil relaxed and sank back into the comfortable depths of his chair. He picked up his book again, listened for a moment to the warm sound of the fire in the stove beside him, glanced about the cozy room, and then, with a sheepish grin, began to read.

The next day another snow-storm came to rage for three days. There was no need to go out, for he had brought in a large reserve supply of wood, and Phil sat beside the stove in the living-room reading. The days were very short, and, in the storm, very dark, and an interesting book upset Phil's schedule. He had not risen until late the morning of the second day of the storm, and his midday meal was forgotten until late in the afternoon. Supper came at ten o'clock that night, and it was nearly midnight when the dishes were washed. Phil returned to the book, the light and the stove in the living-room.

It was a work on ethnology and, because it was about the Cree Indians, the people he knew best, it was more absorbing than fiction. Consequently, Phil was unconscious of a draft of cold air on the floor until his legs were chilled to the knees.

But, somehow, as he glanced absently at the stove, he felt that something other than

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the cold had drawn his attention from the book. He had that indefinable feeling that another person was near him.

Suddenly aroused, he looked through the double door into the dining-room. The door leading on into the kitchen was closed, but as Phil looked he saw the latch slowly lowered into its slot.

There was no sound. Fascinated, he did not take his eyes from the latch of the dining-room door. Then he became conscious of the cold, of his numbed feet.

It aroused him from the trance into which the weird movement of the latch had plunged him. Perplexed, he glanced again at the dining-room door. For the first time apprehension came. But only for a moment. He picked up the lamp and went to the door from the dining-room into the kitchen and opened it.

Instantly a swirl of wind extinguished the lamp and he felt the biting snow particles stinging his face. In the first stages of panic he slammed the door against the wind and retreated to the living-room, where he quickly scratched a match and touched it to the lamp-wick.

The light in the familiar room ended his panic. He knew at once that the wind had blown open the outside kitchen door and that he had imagined the movement of the latch. He went out and closed and bolted the door.

Phil returned to the living-room. In a few minutes he was again absorbed in his reading, so completely so that the first notes of the long, weird howl that came from the marshes failed to reach him. The next instant he was sitting erectly in his chair, listening with strained ears, while a peculiar creeping sensation spread from his neck to the top of his head.

The howl ended and then began again. There was something demoniacal about it. It had a baffled, angry note, and it was not like any sound, human or animal, that Phil had ever heard before.

He did not return to his book. For a long time he sat in his chair listening for a repetition of the sound. None came, but the tense expectancy served only to increase the feeling of uneasiness. Repeatedly Phil told himself that he was a fool, that the solitude was giving him a case of nerves. He even tried to convince himself that he had not heard anything, but the memory of that unearthly howl was too vivid.

At last he looked at his watch. It was after three o'clock. He built up the fire and went to bed.

It was noon when he wakened. As he opened his eyes there flashed upon him a remembrance of the events of the night before. Chuckling at himself for his unusual case of nerves he arose and dressed. He resolved that day to mend the latch so that there might not be a recurrence of the wind-opened door. In a quick reaction from his uneasiness of the night before he began to hum as he went toward the kitchen. The song came to an abrupt end as he halted at the door.

Leading across the room from where he stood were two lines of tracks. Broad, shapeless impressions in the snow which had blown in while the door had stood open, they were irrefutable evidence that he had seen the latch slowly lowered in the slot, that he had had an unknown visitor.

In a vain effort to explain away this mystery Phil argued to himself that they must be his prints made when he went to the door to close it. But the fallacy of such an explanation was immediately apparent in the sight of his own smaller, more slender moccasin impressions leading across the room and back again. In some places his own covered the tracks of the unknown, showing that his visitor had come and gone before he had closed the door in the night.

Phil hurried across the room and opened the door, only to find a level, unbroken drift piled high against it. Outside there was not a track of anything, could not be with the storm still raging.

He swept the snow from the kitchen and started a fire. After he had eaten breakfast he went outside and searched the entire place for signs of some one having been there in the night. But the wind and the thickly falling snow had covered everything.

THAT night the manager of Fort Dease feared the unknown for the first time in his life. He sat beside the stove with a book in his hands, but he did not read. Unwillingly, he found himself reviewing all that he had heard and seen since coming to Fort Dease. He remembered what Joyce had told him of his predecessor, of how the man had gone out a mumbling imbecile after a year on the marshes. He recalled the footprints in the mud, the night he had heard his bedroom

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door opened, the howls from out on the bogs. He remembered all the stories Sandy had told him, the snowy footprints he had found in the Indian house, those he had seen only that noon in the snow on the kitchen floor. And, most vividly of all, he remembered the latch of the door slowly dropping back into its slot.

Phil did not go to bed until nearly morning. He read fitfully after midnight, but always he stopped to listen as if expecting to hear that dreary howl from out in the storm.

The next day the sky had cleared and the wind had gone down. Phil had breakfast eaten before noon and immediately set out to examine every bit of ground about the post. The snow had drifted high against the buildings on the lee sides, while in some of the more exposed places the ground was nearly bare. He looked carefully everywhere, but not a sign of any sort was to be seen.

Returning from the Indian house he stubbed his toe on something hard in a place where the ground had been swept almost clean. The object was kicked loose and ahead of him, but Phil would have passed it had he not caught a glimpse of feathers thrust out from the snow-covered ball. He stooped and picked it up, brushing the snow off with his mittens, and found a half-eaten ptarmigan.

It was not the fact that it was a ptarmigan that caused Phil to look at it in wonder and then in growing horror. It was a realization of what had befallen the bird. It had not been cooked, not even dressed. The flesh had been torn from it in frozen strips. And no animal had done it. There were no small, sharp, awl-like tooth-marks, but wide, flat, dull imprints of human teeth. In the frozen flesh they were as evident as though Phil himself had seen them made.

In sudden horror he dropped the bird and hurried back to the dwelling-house. As he forced his way through the deep drifts he looked apprehensively out over the white waste about him. As far as he could see there was only unbroken, level, white land and unbroken, level gray sea.

For the first time in his life Phil was afraid of the solitude. The view from the fort was so utterly dead and lifeless, so weighted with sinister possibilities, so suggestive of death itself in frightful form, it reached at last to the soul of the man it held within its grasp.

But even as he feared it, Phil defied it. Out there in the center of that waste, with no human chance of escaping from it, in anger because of his very impotency to do so, he shook his fist at the silent, mocking, shrouded desolation and challenged it to battle.

The land, wise, patient, certain, struck greater terror by its seeming disregard of his presence, and he hurried into the house.

From that moment on Phil was never able to get away from the idea of the weeteego. He tried to read but could not. He found himself listening always for that howl from the marshes, for sounds of lifted latches, for footsteps in the hall or in the kitchen. For a time he tried to argue with himself, to convince himself that he was a fool, and in the week that followed the finding of the ptarmigan nothing happened to support his terror.

But the intangible dread persisted until the next storm, and on the second night of it Phil again heard the howl from the marshes. He was waiting for it then, heard the first shrill, wailing note, and instantly the flesh crept upward on the back of his neck.

He did not sleep that night, and when he finally went to bed after midnight the third night of the storm he had a rifle beside him on the covers and a small electric hand lamp, one he had brought from England, beneath his pillow. Sheer weariness brought quick slumber.

Phil found himself wide awake, eyes straining against the darkness, ears against the sound of the wind. He could see nothing, hear nothing, yet he was certain that something had wrenched him back to full consciousness.

And then came a sound, a tiny squeak distinguishable only because it was so much more gentle than the noise of the storm. Softly Phil's hand slid under his pillow until he had grasped the flashlight. There was another tiny squeak, and he leveled the lamp at the door and pressed the button.

Sharply, clearly, distinctly, if only for a fraction of a second, there was outlined a great, black, swollen hand gripping the door, while beneath it, darting quickly out of sight, was another hand clasping a long, rusty knife.

It had been like a picture flashed on to a screen and off again. In the center of the

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circle of light there was nothing except the partly opened door. And yet the hands had been there.

Phil sprang out of bed, a yell bursting from his throat. His rifle in one hand, the flash in the other, he ran down the hall, into the kitchen and against the fury of the storm as it struck in through the open door. The room was empty, but in the snow that covered the floor were the same shapeless, blurred tracks that had been there before.

As Phil stood staring at the footprints there came from out on the marsh the long, wailing howl, rising at the end above the noise of the wind and then ending as if cut with a knife.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BATTLE IN THE DARK

RATHER than inspiring fresh terror, the misshapen prints in the snow though they seemed to be neither human nor animal, induced anger and utter fearlessness. The hands which he had seen at his door, great, black, hairy things, did not bring fear of some inhuman monster. The weird howls from the marshes did not instil any superstitious dread of the *loup-garou*.

Phil dressed, started a fire, swept out the kitchen, started water to boil for tea, and sat down in his living-room to think over the situation. That some one, white or red, insane or criminal, was attempting to take his life was clear. Similar attempts on the life of the former manager evidently had been made, so Phil personally was not the object of attack. Rather, as manager for the Hudson's Bay Company, his life was sought.

There was nothing to cause him to believe that the unknown had a confederate, and, until the Indians arrived at New Year's, there was no means of Phil getting help. It was a duel, without hope of assistance for either.

His mind cleared by his anger, Phil quickly came to the conclusion that there was only one thing for him to do. Whether the midnight haunter of Fort Dease were red or white, sane or mad, he must be killed. Where there is no law a man must make his own, and Phil accepted that first and fundamental code.

He did not have a revolver and there was only one repeating rifle. Each night he kept it beside his chair as he sat reading in the living-room. When he slept, it lay on his bed beside him, and the flash was beneath his pillow. The front and kitchen doors were locked and the windows fastened. After dark each night the dwelling-house became a fortress, and Phil gradually changed his habits of living so that he slept most of the day and was up the greater part of the night. Sometimes he did not waken until the early darkness of mid-afternoon had come, and breakfast and supper exchanged places.

But the days and nights passed without a return of the weeteego, as Phil had begun to refer in his thoughts to his unknown adversary. The intense cold of Winter had come and as he looked out across the lifeless plain he wondered that anything could exist. The damp air was blown in from the bay, condensed and frozen, so that everything was enshrouded in a haze. Rather than hiding the terrifying vastness and desolation of the waste the frost smoke only accentuated the utter loneliness of the land by veiling it.

Christmas came before Phil realized it, so eager was he for a return of the weeteego. As he checked off his calendar he realized that any day the hunters might come, and he began to watch the river and the marshes to the south. But the days passed, and New Year's came and was gone, and no Indians appeared.

It was the third of January before Phil would admit what it meant. The weather had been fine. There was no reason why they should not have come in to sell their fur and to replenish their supplies. When he arose at noon of January fourth he knew that Sandy had told the truth, that the hunters would not return to Fort Dease.

It was the first time the inexorable Northland ever conquered him, that he ever shuddered as he faced the battle it always offers. Alone out there on the edge of the world, unable to send for help, no one knowing that he needed help, threatened constantly by a haunting, ghostly, demon-voiced thing with black, swollen, hairy, knife-clasping hands, it was a situation that threatened his reason as well as his courage.

Now in addition he faced the task of saving the business of Fort Dease from destruction by the very forces which he could not control. He had given out an average of five hundred dollars to more than forty

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hunters, goods to be repaid with furs in the Winter and Spring. If the Indians never came back, if they took their Winter's catch to a Free-trader up the Bay, it meant that the Company would lose the twenty thousand of debt and the future business of the post. Failure to hold the hunters would compel the closing of Fort Dease.

The solitude, the desolation, the lack of real work and the strain of night and day defense against the weeteego had worn Phil's spirit. Now the sudden realization of the danger to the Company aroused him as nothing else could. It was a battle-cry to the loyalty of an old Hudson's Bay man. It recovered for him almost magically all his former defiance.

But it could not bring a plan of action. Desperate as was his need, he seemed helpless in the situation that confronted him. Without dogs it would be madness for him to attempt to travel even so far as the nearest outpost of the Company. He could not carry or drag enough food to last him until he reached his destination. The trail would have to be broken through deep snow. More important still, the route must be known. Only an Indian could be trusted to make such a journey. Only an Indian could cross that vast space with certainty.

For a week Phil strove for some solution. With the weeteego still alive and threatening the post it would be futile to attempt to reason with the hunters. Nor would they be willing under his leadership to wage war on the evil spirit. Help in that task must come from outside. And after that there must be dogs and Indians to carry the news of the capture. Passive resistance to the weeteego might suffice with only his own life in danger. But the crisis to the fort demanded action.

Why Phil felt this he could not have told. It was the unconscious effect of the history of the Company. Every post established in the wilderness was witness to the force, the unconquerable will and the unselfish loyalty of the Company's servants. Always it had meant a struggle. Sometimes it had meant bloodshed and the sacrifice of life. Each stood as the symbol of accomplishment. The relinquishment of one would be a breach of trust to the men who had battled before him. Fort Dease must not be lost through his inactivity.

But the tenacity of his purpose brought no solution. The very hopelessness of his plight made him savage. His impotence in the face of this great need sent him pacing for long hours each night up and down the living-room.

IT WAS in one of these desperate moods and on a stormy night that the weeteego again visited Fort Dease. One of Phil's precautions, since he had converted night into day, had been to tack blankets over the windows so that no light would shine through. Then, if the unknown came, he could not tell whether Phil were in bed.

For a long time he had been sitting in his chair staring at the wall in front of him, concentrating with all his power on the problem of reaching the Indians. He was aroused by a faint noise in the kitchen and jumped to his feet, every nerve tense. Again the sound came to him, and he located it at once. The weeteego was trying to lift the latch of the outside kitchen door.

Phil turned the light very low, picked up his rifle and walked noiselessly into the dining-room. Slowly and carefully he unlatched and swung back the door into the kitchen and listened. Again he heard a sound. Instantly he lifted his rifle to his shoulder and fired.

While the room still shook with the report, Phil ran back and turned up the lamp. He rushed out into the kitchen, his rifle in one hand, the light in the other, to find the outer door open.

A quick glance told him the room was empty. He set the lamp on the table and cautiously crossed the kitchen to close the door, only to retreat when he realized the danger of such an unprotected position. The weeteego might be waiting outside. In a close encounter his rifle would be useless.

As Phil stood there, irresolute, the weird howl, now familiar but always startling, came from out of the bog. When released from the paralyzing influence of the wailing notes that rose and fell with the wind he sprang forward and slammed the door, only to have it fly back before the storm.

Again he heard the howl, and when it ended he reached for the latch. It was gone. He groped with his fingers and found that he had shot it away when he had fired at the door.

The discovery brought a soothing relief.

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For a time he had believed that the weeteego had solved the lock, that bars and hinges were powerless against him. This plain evidence of the lack of the supernatural helped to bring a rational state of mind, and Phil propped a stick of firewood against the door and returned to the warmth of the living-room.

He did not fear a return of the weeteego. The last howl had come from far away, and there never had been a double attack. He turned the lamp low as before and, his rifle standing against the wall beside him, stretched out in his chair. The night wore on and at last, the stimulation of excitement gone, he dropped off to sleep.

Phil believed at first it was his own voice that wakened him, a yell that still echoed in the little room as he started upright in his chair. Then he became conscious of an unfamiliar odor, a strange, nauseating, penetrating smell that drew his head sharply around toward the kitchen door. There was the scent of wet hair and untanned skins, of putrid meat and gross uncleanliness.

At the same instant a huge, blurry, hairy mass hurled itself toward him in the gloom, sprawled out and fastened itself upon him, crushing him through a wrecked chair to the floor. Two hands which he knew were black and swollen and hairy reached for his throat, and there was a hot, suffocating breath in his face.

What happened in the next few minutes Phil never knew. He could not remember a conscious act, a deliberate plan. There remained only a recollection of bursting chest and of muscles driven to superhuman effort by a remorseless fear, of a putrid odor from which he strove in vain to escape.

Rolling, striking, kicking, he finally got to his feet. The fear of something inhuman, monstrous, gave him a strength and a quickness he had never known, and at last he was free of everything except the overpowering odor. The table and the lamp had gone over with the first rush of his adversary, and he stood, panting, waiting, in the intense darkness.

A sound came from across the room and he braced himself for a renewal of the attack. There was a rush of padded feet on the floor, and he struck out blindly and in terror. Losing his balance, he stumbled into the hall door. Instantly he whirled around, his hands outstretched, his muscles taut.

Alert as only a man can be when he faces death, Phil stood poised for instant action. He held his breath that nothing might interfere with his hearing the faintest sound. Outside there was the the noise of the wind. Inside there was an absolute stillness.

And then from out at the edge of the bog, demoniacal in its fury, moaning, baffled, now more threatening than ever, came the howl of the weeteego. It rose and fell and ended in a scream, and while it lasted Phil stood transfixed with the terror of it.

When it was not repeated he went into the kitchen and found and lighted another lamp. His first act was to pile everything movable in the room against the outer door. Then he returned to the living-room to survey the damage. His big easy chair was splintered beyond repair. The lamp was smashed, the table and chairs overturned, and one blanket had been torn from over a window. He tacked this in place, and even as he did so, he looked fearfully at the window as if expecting to see a horrible, monstrous face peering in at him.

From that night on the manager of Fort Dease never knew what it was to be without fear. He was wakened from his sleep by dreams of hairy monsters that breathed fetid fumes in his face. He was startled from his book or his meals by loose siding snapping in the wind.

He had sane moments, short periods when he reasoned that he was safe from attack when there was no storm. The weeteego had visited Fort Dease only at night and only when snow and wind would cover all trace of him before daylight. There were times when he remembered that he had beaten the weeteego in a fair fight, that he had driven him to rout after a blind struggle in the dark.

But one feature of that struggle had come to him with a terrible significance. The morning after the fight he had found in the dining-room the long, rusty knife that had been thrust inside his bedroom door that night he had seen the weeteego's hands. The sight of it brought the recollection that he had heard it drop just at the instant the burly, shaggy form had hurled itself upon him.

He remembered, too, that not once had he been struck, not once had there been an attempt to gouge or bite, although he had

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felt the black swollen hands over his eyes and the face of the monster had been pressed against his. There had been only an attempt to smother him by sheer weight, to bind his arms and to pinion him to the floor.

There was only one explanation of this. The weeteego had not sought to kill him. He would have kept the knife to do that, and he had a gun or he would not have stolen the gunpowder. In the struggle he could have struck, or maimed, could have torn Phil's throat with his teeth, once could have battered his head against the floor. But he had done none of these things. He had only tried to overpower Phil, to make him a prisoner.

The thought of being in the hands of the weeteego was far more terrifying than death. Whatever this monster was, sane or mad, white or red, human or half animal, to be held captive by it was unthinkable.

This fear grew as the days passed until it became an obsession. Phil forgot the failure of the Indians to come in at New Year's, the loss to the Company. It was seldom that he thought of Joyce. He did not remember Wickson at all.

His nights became interminable periods of suspense, his days short, unsatisfying naps. He became thin, haggard. He never left the house to get wood without standing his rifle by the kitchen door. When the frost smoke permitted, he spent long hours searching the white waste about him for some sign of life.

Most of the time Phil sat in a chair, merely waiting. Sometimes he had slight bursts of energy. In one of these he got bear traps from the trading shop and set them in front of the windows. He argued once that the weeteego must have food, forgetting that nothing eatable had ever been taken from the cache or the kitchen, and filled pieces of bannock with strychnine and placed them outside the kitchen door.

The weeteego came again. Every time there was a storm his howl was heard out on the marshes. Twice Phil heard him at the kitchen door and fired his rifle as quickly as he could work the lever, with no other result than a badly weakened barrier. Once more he found a half-eaten ptarmigan near the Indian house and immediately he set bear traps at the door. After the next storm he found them snapped and tossed to one side.

JANUARY passed and most of February. The last week of his third month alone at Fort Dease it snowed continuously. The great, flat waste in which he lived was wrapped in a driving white cloud. Day and night the storm continued, and day and night the weeteego howled. After three days of it Phil's nerves were strained to the breaking point. He was no longer sane, no longer capable of anything except a constant watch. He lived in a chair beside the stove, sleeping fitfully, waking in spasms of terror, listening always for the howl on the marshes.

The end of the fourth day of the storm found him so near exhaustion he kept awake with difficulty. His nerves were raw, twitching. He had clear moments when he feared for his reason. He drank great quantities of hot, black tea.

Darkness came early, with hardly a change from the grayness of the storm. The weeteego had not howled for twenty-four hours, and Phil had not slept, waiting for him to howl. The suspense had become unbearable, and he paced up and down the room on the border of frenzy.

And then it came, as startling as ever, wailing, moaning, threatening. Phil paused in the center of the room and shook his fist in the direction of the sound. Then he grasped his skin coat from the wall and bound it about him with the long, colored sash. He slipped on his big gauntlet mittens and tightened the drawstring of the coat's hood about his face. Feverishly he picked up his rifle and dashed through the kitchen, out into the storm and the darkness.

His snow-shoes were standing upright in a drift and in a moment his feet were in the lashings. Then, eager, intent, he listened for a repetition of the howl.

It sounded almost instantly, far out on the marsh up the river, and with a swish of flying snow Phil leaped toward it.

He had no plan, no lucid idea of what he was about to do. He only knew that off there ahead of him, somewhere in the storm, was the cause of all his trouble, the thing that was driving him mad. His one desire was to find it, to crush it, to end its fiendish torture. He felt that he must sleep, that he must have rest, and he knew that he could not so long as the weeteego lived.

After a couple of hundred yards he paused to listen. He heard it again and plunged on at once, not realizing that this last howl was

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different from any he had ever heard. For the first time it had a note of fear, of dismay, almost of terror. It was short, quick, yelping like a brush wolf's clatter.

Phil ran despite the deep snow. It was terrific work, but he did not know it, no more than did he realize that he was out of sight of the fort, without a sense of direction, rushing on blindly in the storm.

Sheer weariness brought him to a halt at last and he listened. There was only the rustling of the snow particles driven across the drifts and the roar of the wind. Still expectant, still eager, Phil waited, ready to dash forward at the first note.

Then from off to the right came a single, sharp cry, so totally different from the howl of the weeteego that Phil turned, bewildered, stupefied. It was repeated, and then clearly, distinctly above the storm he heard a voice that was unmistakable—

"Phil! Phil!"

CHAPTER IX

THE WEETEEGO'S LAST ATTACK

THE voice of Joyce Plummer coming to him out of the storm and the darkness could not clear Phil's brain of the cobwebs with which it had been cluttered for more than a month. It was too unreal. The thought that it could be Joyce was too impossible. She was separated from him by five hundred miles of wilderness, by a northern Winter, by conditions too severe for her soft muscles and tender skin.

And yet so compelling had been the call, Phil started at once in the direction from which it had come. As he plunged ahead, sending the snow flying from his webs, he forgot the weeteego completely. Her voice, his delirium, brought a new and more terrifying obsession. Joyce was in Wickson's power back at Savant House. He had broken trail through half a thousand miles of drifts to save her.

"I'm coming!" he cried when he heard her voice again. "I'm coming! I'll kill him."

He imagined that he was out on the lake in front of Savant House. He expected that each step would bring him to the rise leading up from the ice. Fifty yards after that and he would be at the door of the dwelling-house. Would he never reach the shore? Where was Osborne?

"I'm coming!" he called again.

And then in the storm and darkness ahead of him he saw something darker, shadowy in the snow. In another moment he was upon it.

"Phil! Phil!" came a voice, and Joyce reached out her arms to him.

"Where is he?" demanded Phil as he looked over her shoulder.

"He passed me right back there, just before I called. Did you hear him?"

"No, I didn't hear any one except you."

"Not that terrible howl? I thought it was a wolf at first, and then he almost ran into me. When he saw me he turned and ran right where you came from, and he screamed again, worse than before. Was that the weeteego, Phil?"

"Weeteego?"

He could only repeat what she said. As his brain cleared of the fog and he began to realize something of the true situation he became the more bewildered.

"There is a weeteego, isn't there? That's why I came, Phil. I heard you were all alone up here and that something terrible, a weeteego, was trying to kill you."

"You came! From Savant House?"

More than her presence there beside him in the storm, the knowledge of what such a trip must have meant served to bring order to his confused brain. But returning sanity only added to his bewilderment.

"Of course," Joyce said. "Is it far from here?"

"Far? Where?"

She peered at him anxiously, trying to see his face in the darkness.

"To Fort Dease?"

"No, no. Not far. The river must be here somewhere."

"Yes, it's right beside us."

"Then we just follow it downstream. It's not far. We'll be there in a few minutes. Come on."

"But Phil! The dogs!"

"The dogs! Of course. There must have been dogs."

He turned back and Joyce took his hand.

"They're right here behind us," she said gently. "I was breaking trail for them. Come and we'll get them."

Together they went a few yards on Joyce's back trail.

"Here they are," she said when the leader shook the snow from his coat and sprang to his feet just in front of her. "You lead

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the way, Phil, and they'll follow. They know me."

He did as she said and began to break out a trail along the river, the high, cut bank of which was dimly visible on his left. He kept on until a slight rise told him he was nearing the picket fence and then veered slightly until he struck it.

"We're almost there," he said as he turned. "The dogs coming all right?"

"Yes. They're coming."

By the time Phil had plowed through from the gate to the kitchen door his brain had cleared completely. In the same time Joyce, remembering his queer questions and uncertain, hesitating actions, came to the firm conclusion that he, like his predecessor, had become deranged as a result of the months alone in haunted Fort Dease. So fearful had she been of finding him a babbling idiot, so certain had she been after the first words with him, Joyce found herself trembling with the dread of what she faced.

As Phil stopped at the kitchen door he saw the poisoned bannocks he had placed outside for the weeteego. He snatched them up at once and carried them inside without a word. Then the thought of the bear traps in front of the windows suddenly came to him. He hurried out and grasped the leader by the trace.

"Go inside," he called to Joyce as he began to drag the team away from the house. "Go in where it's warm. I'll put up the dogs."

He tugged violently, for the dogs, hungry and tired, had smelled the place where the food had been and were trying to break away toward the side of the house. Joyce hesitated a moment and then sprang to help him. She ran toward the wheel dog, only to be forced back by the team toward the window of Phil's bedroom.

"Go back!" he cried excitedly. "Go back into the kitchen."

He dropped the leader's trace and darted across to Joyce, who was not more than two feet from the bear traps hidden beneath the snow. He grasped her roughly and pulled her back to the kitchen door.

"Go in!" he cried as he sprang again to the leader of the now disorganized team.

By sheer strength he straightened out the dogs in their traces, lifting the leader clear of the ground as he pulled, and still by sheer strength he dragged the team after him toward the kennels. Joyce, more certain than ever of his complete mental derangement, turned and stumbled into the dark kitchen. Her knees struck a bench and she sat down, the strength suddenly gone as was the spirit which had driven her all the way from Savant House.

PHIL did not come in for fifteen minutes or more. As Joyce waited all the forebodings engendered during the six weeks of her journey from Savant House enveloped her. She was alone in a lifeless world with a fear-haunted maniac. The thing she dreaded most had come to the one she loved most, but even a sense of the responsibility that she now knew to be hers could not lift her above the crushing hopelessness of her predicament. By her long journey she had conquered the North, only to lose to it at the end.

And then Phil entered, groped about for the lamp and lit it. His quarter of an hour spent in unharnessing and feeding the dogs, in tying them to their stalls in the kennel, in springing the bear traps he had set beneath the windows, had completed the work of restoring his wandering wits. To him responsibility had brought sanity and sanity had brought fearlessness and confidence.

"Joyce!" he cried as he turned and saw her in the light for the first time. "Why did you come out here to Dease?"

"I had to, Phil."

She rose to her feet, hesitated a moment, searching his eyes for a sight of the thing she had heard in his voice out there in the storm and the darkness. But it was not there and, dizzy with the delight of it, she swayed forward into his waiting arms.

"Why did you come?" Phil repeated after a moment.

"No one else would come. No one else would believe you needed help. And you do, don't you, Phil?"

"Of course not."

"And you're—you're all right, Phil?"

"Certainly, I'm all right. But nothing that could ever happen to me could be worth such a trip for you. What made you come?"

"Start the fire and get me something to eat and I'll tell you as you work. I'm nearly famished. I haven't had anything

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since breakfast, and you were in sight when it stopped snowing for a minute this morning, just as I was starting."

"You were out there alone in that storm all day and camped near here last night!"

It was the thought of the weeteego, not of the storm, that brought the exclamation from Phil, and for an instant the old terror was in his eyes.

"What is it?" Joyce asked quickly.

"Nothing," he answered, thinking she had seen his fear.

"But I saw it, just before I called to you, down there on the bank of the river. Was that the weeteego?"

"Weeteego! Nonsense!"

"But Phil! I saw it, and you were out there looking for it. And the half-breed who ran away and left you alone said he saw it and that you did, right here in this house. The Indians who brought me almost here were afraid of it."

Before Phil returned from putting up the dogs he had determined, if possible, to keep all knowledge of the mysterious specter of the storms from Joyce. His own haunted weeks were so vivid, the terror of them so fresh, the delirium from which he had just been freed still so oppressive, he knew that she must be spared an experience similar to his own.

"Sandy was always seeing things," he replied carelessly as he busied himself with the fire. "I'm glad he got out. Only mooned around the kitchen here talking weeteego until he was off his head."

"But Phil! The man who ran past me back there on the river! Who was he?"

"An Indian was in to trade this morning. Perhaps he was camped somewhere around here and when he ran into you he thought you were the weeteego, though there never was a weeteego outside of Sandy's head."

"And you haven't seen anything, or heard anything, since you've been here?"

"Not a thing."

Phil was bending over the kettle as he spoke. Suddenly he leaped to the middle of the room, every nerve taut, his eyes staring at the door. Joyce at the same instant had jumped from her bench and clung to him. Together they stood for a moment, tense, alert, terrified, while above the sound of the wind rose and fell that demoniacal howl of the weeteego.

There was a new note of savagery, of desperate defiance, in the long, weird wail, and it ended in a diabolic shriek that left Phil as nerveless as it did Joyce.

But he was the first to recover, and his laugh was perfectly natural as he said:

"That certainly startled me. It's the first sound I've heard all winter, unless I made it myself. It isn't often a wolf comes around Fort Dease."

He turned back to the stove, but Joyce grasped his arm and pulled him around until he faced her.

"Listen, Phil," she commanded. "Don't try to deceive me. You can't. You never could with those eyes and that face and your nervousness. I know Sandy told the truth. I felt it from the first. That is why I came. And because I know some of it, you must tell me everything. I'm here, and I'm going to stay here with you. Now tell me about this weeteego."

Phil knew at once that it was useless to try to deceive Joyce. As he saw how cool and unterrified she was, as he thought of the five hundred miles she had traveled to be with him, he felt suddenly ashamed of his own weakness in succumbing to something that had only the appearance of the supernatural.

"I don't know what is," he said simply. "It's human, of course, but whether it's red or white, or insane or not, I don't know. It's clever enough to come only when there is a storm so that I haven't been able to track it, and it stands off there on the marshes and howls like you just heard. Of course that sort of thing gets on your nerves when you're all alone in this hole."

"But doesn't it do any more than howl?"

Phil hesitated. He did not want to tell all that the weeteego had done. As he searched his imagination for a harmless story he saw Joyce look at the splintered door.

"Did he ever get in?" she asked.

"He always makes an attempt," he answered, suddenly finding himself unable to even belittle the weeteego's activities. "Once since Sandy left he did. He caught me asleep in the living-room, but I managed to get loose and he ran."

"Why didn't he kill you while you were asleep?"

"That's the queer part of it. He could have done so easily. But he seemed bent on capturing me alive."

"Capturing you alive!"

Joyce lost some of her self-possession and courage, but she quickly recovered both.

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"Why haven't you killed him?"

"I have tried. I have shot at him there at the door three times, and I've set bear traps, and I've put out poisoned food. But he never wants food. He never takes it when he can. Long ago I made up my mind to take my first chance to shoot him, but he never comes except in big storms and at night."

"But with both of us here, and he knows you are not alone now, there will be no danger," Joyce said confidently.

"No, because we are going to leave at once."

"Phil! Not desert the Company!"

"The Company has been deserted. This weeteego has driven all the Indians away. None of them came in at New Year's and they won't come in the Spring. I gave out twenty thousand dollars' worth of debt and the Company stands to lose that and all future business here. I've got to get out and round up the Indians before they get to the opposition down the bay this Summer. I would have been away from here six weeks or more ago if I could have gone. But without dogs it would have been impossible."

"And we'll go out together!" Joyce cried excitedly. "Phil, that will be the jolliest sort of a trip. Just you and I together in the wilderness. We can do it, can't we?"

"I was thinking of taking you only so far as Lowry's nearest outpost and then getting Indians to guide me to the hunters' camps. Only an Indian could find them. But Joyce! You haven't told me how you got here."

"But we can go to the outpost together," she cried, ignoring his question. "We'll do that much together, and, Phil, we'll save Fort Dease in spite of Wickson."

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Wickson wouldn't send help when he heard what had happened here. He laughed and said there was nothing the matter, that you had let an Indian superstition ruin the post and could stay here until you got out the best way you could. He said if you weren't man enough to handle some gullible natives he didn't want you in his district."

"He didn't say that to you?" demanded Phil fiercely.

"No, he told Mr. Osborne, and Mrs. Osborne told me. Then he left on a trip of inspection in the western part of his district. The day after he left I started. The Osbornes tried to keep me. They said I could never get here. They said you were all right and that the story had grown by the time that it reached Savant House, as such stories always do. They even believed that Sandy had run away because he had trouble with you and that there wasn't any weeteego after all.

"But I came anyway. I had some money, and Mrs. Osborne helped me to get two Indians and two dog teams, and we went to Mr. Lowry's post, and then to his outpost, and then here. Only yesterday morning the Indians refused to go any farther.

"They had heard about the weeteego and they said night before last that they had heard it howl. They were going to take both teams of dogs and go back. But I made them leave one for me, and I broke trail all yesterday and today. It wasn't far. Only fifteen or sixteen miles, they said, right down the bank of the river. And I had ridden nearly all the way from Savant House and wasn't tired."

"Did they start right back?" asked Phil quickly.

"No. They said they would wait there a day and rest. Then they were to start straight back for the outpost."

"And had you followed the river very far before they stopped?"

"Yes, for several days."

"That's great!" he exclaimed joyfully. "We need only follow the river until we strike their trail. It will be easy going after that and it will be certain. We won't have more than three days of travel before the end of the storm permits us to see where they went, and we may even catch them."

It was a great relief to Phil, for after he had broached his plan of starting back at once with Joyce he had realized that he was risking her life as well as his own in an attempt to cross the white desert without a trail to guide him.

"We'll start the moment the storm is over," he said as he turned again to his task of preparing a meal.

AFTER supper they sat in the living-room for a long time. The weeteego was forgotten. The storm had ended soon after supper and the sky was clear. They knew they could start in the morning, but, though they needed the sleep,

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there was too much to talk about. Joyce drew from Phil much of the story of his lonely vigil out there on the edge of the world, but mostly they talked of themselves, in that happy, aimless fashion of lovers.

Inevitably the subject of Wickson came up.

"Did he bother you?" asked Phil vehemently.

"Not disagreeably. Really, Phil, had it been under other circumstances I wouldn't have cared so much. He is an unusual man in many ways. He can be most interesting, and agreeable, only he never could be to me after what he made you suffer. I'd be afraid of him, if I were near him too long. He gives the impression of invincibility, somehow. You can't help but believe he gains everything he sets out to gain. Just that impression of him weakens any one. I—I'm afraid of him."

Phil glared at the stove and said nothing.

"But you're not afraid! For me!" Joyce cried.

He was at her side in an instant.

"Never, sweetheart," he whispered. "After what you've done I'll never again know what any sort of fear is."

Phil turned over his bedroom to Joyce and said he would make a bed on the couch in the living-room.

"But the weeteego?" she asked. "Hadn't we better take turns sleeping?"

"He'll never bother us on a clear night. He never has. He's clever enough to come only when he will leave no tracks. No, we needn't worry about him. I'll sleep on the floor out here, and as soon as we can in the morning we'll get started."

But Phil did not sleep on the floor. He had no intention of doing so. Whatever the weeteego's habits, he would not take any chances so long as Joyce was in the house. He piled furniture against the kitchen door. In the living-room he turned the lamp far down and sat on the couch with his back to the wall, his rifle beside him. He made himself as uncomfortable as possible that he might not fall asleep.

But his exhaustion was far greater than he had realized in the excitement of Joyce's arrival. Once in the night she crept out and found him lying on his side, deep in sleep. She brought a blanket from her bed and laid it gently over him, dropped a soft kiss on his hair and went back to bed.

WHEN Joyce wakened again it was daylight. She listened for a moment but there were no sounds. She knew that Phil had meant to start as quickly as possible and she believed that he was out harnessing the dogs.

But when no sound came after fifteen minutes of drowsy waiting she sprang from bed and rushed out into the living-room.

"Phil!" she called when she found the place empty. "Phil!"

The room was very cold and she went out to the kitchen. The outside door was open. The sight of it threw her into a vague panic.

"Phil! Phil!" she cried as she rushed to look out.

In the deep snow near the house she saw the tracks made when she and Phil had come with the dogs. The storm had half buried them, rounding the edges and corners, rendering them shapeless.

But over all else, sharp and clear and standing out with sculptural distinctness, were the tracks of a toboggan that had been brought to the door and then taken away. Beside it were great, shapeless footprints, and directly in front of the door was a huge, round, deep impression that might have been made by a sack of grain tossed into the drift.

Again Joyce called, but her voice was lost instantly in the silence of the vast, desolate waste. Terrified, she rushed back to the bedroom and put on her moccasins and outer clothing. Fastening the sash about her skin coat as she ran, she went out to the store, to the dog kennels, to the servants' house and to the Indian house.

But nowhere was there a track, nowhere a sign of Phil, except the bright, clear impression of a toboggan that had been drawn out through the gate and then north down the shore to the ice along the edge of the bay.

From where she stood on the bank of the river she could see any moving thing within many miles. She looked north, south, east and west, but everywhere the view was the same. The white expanse was unbroken.

Back at the kitchen door she looked carefully at the tracks made since the storm had ended. Chiseled in the great, shapeless hole in the drift was something that furnished her first clue. As if it had been stamped in hot wax, there was the unmistakable im-

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pression of a knotted rope. Even the twisted strands were clearly defined.

In terror Joyce glanced at the trail made by the toboggan down to the shore ice. It went straight out from the land until it disappeared on the stone-like crust. And as she looked she knew that the weeteego had accomplished his purpose, that he had captured Phil alive.

CHAPTER X

SOLOMON MOSES

PHIL wakened once in the night after Joyce had placed the blanket over him. He threw it off and again sat bolt upright, his back to the wall.

For a time the fear of what might have happened while he was asleep kept him alert. But his nervous exhaustion and need of sleep were far greater than he realized, and in half an hour his head had dropped to one side and he was slumbering so soundly that even the penetrating odor that soon after filled the room failed to rouse him.

So extreme was his exhaustion he was easy prey for the great, hairy figure that padded softly across the room from the kitchen door and looked down at him. The next instant a long, narrow bag of soft caribou skins, the hair on the outside, was slipped over his head. His body was given a quick pull and then a thrust and his head was on the floor and his feet sticking into the air over the edge of the couch.

So quickly was it done Phil did not recover complete consciousness until the bag had been slipped up over his feet and tied tightly. His head had been thrust through a small hole in the end but all the rest of his body was completely enclosed. The sack was so tight he could not draw his arms up from his sides, and even as he realized what had happened the weeteego began lashing him around and around with a rope so that he was perfectly helpless.

Phil did not make a sound. After the first convulsive twist of his body he did not even struggle. He realized at once that he could do nothing to escape and his first thought was that, by keeping quiet, by not calling for help, the weeteego would bear him away without disturbing Joyce.

When his prisoner was firmly bound, the weeteego stood up and looked around. He took one step toward the hall and a yell of warning was upon Phil's lips. But the bulky, furry figure, shadowy in the dim light from the low-turned lamp, turned suddenly, picked something from the floor and the next moment was pulling Phil's otter-skin cap down over his ears. Then he lifted his prisoner, carried him out through the kitchen door and dumped him into a snowdrift.

Phil landed in a sitting position and saw at once that he had been left alone and also that he could, by a series of jerking, convulsive movements, hop back into the kitchen. Before he could draw up his body for the first movement the weeteego reappeared from around the corner of the building with a toboggan. He lifted his prisoner into it and began to lash him fast.

Instantly Phil strove with all his strength to throw himself off. He lifted his legs and tried to thrust the weeteego from him. He lifted his head and butted futilely. But the great, hairy odorous thing only laughed as he sprawled out on top of his victim and continued to lash him down. In two minutes his task was completed and he had jumped ahead to the traces. The toboggan was jerked forward and Phil saw the gate-posts flash by. There was a short struggle in deep drifts and then his head dipped and he shot down the gentle slope to the bay.

The soft, grating sound of the toboggan in the snow ceased and he began to bump along on the hard crust and jagged pieces of broken ice. Straight out from shore he went and then came a sudden halt. Phil saw the weeteego bending over him and then his face was covered with a piece of caribou hide. It was very cold and he was glad of the protection, but instantly he knew that it had been done for another purpose. Around and around, until it fairly spun, the toboggan was whirled until Phil had no sense whatever of direction. Then the weeteego started off at a trot, the toboggan jerking and bumping over the hard drifts and broken ice behind him.

As Phil lay there, unable to get an inkling from the stars as to which way he was going, bound so that he could not move, thumped and battered by the constant pounding of the toboggan on the wind-carved, tide-disrupted surface, his thoughts were more of Joyce than his own predicament. She would waken in the morning

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to find him gone. She could not find a track on the hard surface of the bay to indicate what had happened to him. It would be impossible for her to go back to Lowry's nearest outpost alone. No one would come to Fort Dease for four or five months. She could not survive until then.

There was, too, the possibility that the weeteego might return and capture her. What that would mean he could not even guess, except that it would be something horrible. He knew that, at any risk, he must escape and return to her or at least kill this monster that now held him prisoner.

In the face of what might happen to Joyce, Phil had no time to consider his own predicament except from the angle of regaining his liberty. With the memory of his fear-haunted months so vividly fresh, with his knowledge of the depressing effect of the vast desolation by which she was surrounded, with the horror of this mysterious specter of Fort Dease multiplied by its ultimate success, he was ready to cry out in futile protest against the fate Joyce could not evade. He writhed and twisted inside his tightly lashed bag, and when he recognized the uselessness of it he lay still and cursed until stopped by a wild mocking, exultant burst of laughter from the traces ahead.

HOUR after hour Phil was dragged across the rough surface of the shore ice. Occasionally there was a short stop for rest, but the thing ahead seemed to be more tireless than a sledge dog. It romped at times as if from sheer excess of spirits, but not once, except when it had laughed, had it taken any notice of its prisoner.

Dawn came and the light was reflected from under the skin drawn across Phil's face. Two more hours went by. They seemed like weeks to the prisoner. Despite the thick sack in which he was bound, the lashings did not permit circulation and the intense cold reached him. He became more and more cramped and stiff and in time the sluggishness became of the mind as well as of the body. The constant hammering of the toboggan on the rough going, the monotonous jerking and thumping, combined with the cold to bring a lethargy which he could not shake off.

It was while Phil was in this stupor that the toboggan finally struck a smooth, even trail and ascended a slight rise. When he finally became conscious that he was no longer being bumped and mauled on the shore ice, he strove to remember which way the toboggan had turned when it struck the land. Unless he knew there was no way to tell whether he had been carried northwest or southeast from Fort Dease. And without that knowledge he could never return should he escape from the weeteego. There would not be a mark on the packed snow or ice over which he had been hauled, and he might wander on to starvation, all the time leaving Joyce farther behind him.

While he was still cursing himself for having relaxed his vigilance, there was a sudden shading of the light reflected up beneath the piece of caribou skin that covered his face. Then the toboggan stopped and his head was uncovered.

The first thing Phil saw brought paralyzing amazement. Above him and all about him were trees, bent, ragged spruce trees thirty feet high and six inches thick at the butts. As his stunned mind accepted them it accepted also what they told him. There were no trees like these within nearly one hundred and fifty miles of Fort Dease. He had become unconscious from the cold and exhaustion, had been delirious and had been days on the journey instead of a few hours. If he did regain his liberty he could never find his way back to Joyce, could never make the trip without adequate equipment even if there were a trail.

Completely unnerved by his discovery, Phil turned his head listlessly and for the first time saw the weeteego in daylight. The man was standing a few feet away, calmly surveying his prisoner.

There was nothing maniacal, nothing malignant, in the face Phil saw. It was that of an Indian, with all the Indian's usual immobility of feature and inscrutability of eye. It told nothing, either of friendliness or hostility, of power or weakness, of madness or rationality.

But there the similarity to the usual type of native ceased. Never had Phil seen an Indian dressed in anything except the manufactured garments furnished by the Hudson's Bay Company. This man was clothed only in skins, skins half tanned and with the fur on. Great, bulgy, shapeless folds of them enveloped a body larger than that of the usual native and gave him the appearance of a huge, hairy, upright animal.

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Even the skill of the savage in fashioning such garments was absent. Their barbarous crudeness gave the impression of something bestial.

The Indian began at once to take off the lashings that bound Phil to the toboggan. He removed the rope which he had wound about the bag and his prisoner stretched and drew up his cramped legs and arms with a sigh of relief. That sigh brought the first change of expression in the man's face. To Phil's amazement, he smiled, a friendly, understanding smile that said plainly, "I thought you'd feel better."

The Indian disappeared and Phil twisted himself about so that he could see a skin teepee behind him. He heard the tiny crackle of a newly kindled fire, and then the Indian came out and carried him inside.

Phil began to hope that the friendliness of the smile was to be extended to deeds as well, for the Indian began at once to untie the mouth of the bag at his feet. But he had no sooner slipped it back than he passed a leather thong tightly about the ankles. Then from under a mass of skins and fur at the rear of the teepee he drew a piece of chain, red and pitted with rust. For a moment he fondled it proudly, triumphantly. Then he began to fasten it about Phil's legs just above the ankles. He worked deliberately, yet certainly, as though by a prearranged plan. The links were small enough to permit tying, and the chain was long enough for a series of intricate and clever knots which Phil knew never could be untied.

He did not struggle as he watched, for he knew it was useless. From the beginning he had seen that a trick alone would give him the necessary opportunity to kill his captor or to escape. But as he saw the skilful manner in which the Indian tied the chain his courage vanished. Only a file could ever free him.

The chain adjusted to his satisfaction, the Indian removed the leather thongs and pushed back the bag until he could reach Phil's hands. These he bound with thongs to a leather belt he placed about Phil's waist and then removed the bag entirely.

Phil sat up to be nearer the fire and his captor at once stretched a piece of rope from the belt at the back to a stake which was firmly imbedded in the frozen ground. Another rope was run from the chain to another stake in the front, and Phil found himself able to sit up, lie down or roll over but powerless to move his hands more than six inches from his waist or draw up his feet so that he could work at the chain.

His prisoner tied to his satisfaction, the Indian placed more wood on the fire and then went out. He had not spoken, had not given a sign of his intentions or plans, and Phil, though he knew the man was a Cree, had made no attempt to speak to him. He knew that, above all things, he must not act too quickly, and that by waiting and watching he could gain more information than by asking questions.

The whole thing was a mystery to the Hudson's Bay man. He had spent a dozen years in the Far North but never had he heard of anything similar to the present situation in any of its aspects. Indians had rebelled, had attacked forts and killed servants of the Company in the old days. In more recent years, within Phil's own experience, there had been sporadic, isolated instances of individuals running amuck. But never had there been an attempt to make a white man prisoner in this amazing fashion.

That the Indian was the man he had come to refer to as the weeteego there was no doubt. And as Phil thought of the real meaning of the word, he shivered. Had a weeteego decided to eat a white man instead of some one of his people? If he did, there was absolutely no hope of escape. Bound as he was, Phil knew it was useless to try to free himself. He knew the Indian would maintain constant vigilance and that a blow on the head or the thrust of a knife would be the means of frustrating any dash for liberty.

Horrible as was the idea of being eaten by this savage, desperate as he found his situation, Phil was reassured somewhat by the apparent sanity of his captor. A weeteego is mentally deranged. This man appeared to be entirely normal. And, came the encouraging thought, if he had intended only to eat his prisoner he would not have taken the trouble to capture him alive. He would have killed him that first night he had gained entrance to the living-room while Phil was asleep.

But despite the apparent sanity of the Indian as expressed by his face and actions, there remained the utter lack of anything else that was usual. The man was dressed entirely in skins, poorly tanned or not

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tanned at all. There were no dishes for cooking and on the other side of the teepee was a large piece of meat that had been gnawed raw and frozen. The dirt and filth were unspeakable, and the odor, as the fire warmed the interior of the shelter, became nauseating.

Except for the chain and piece of rope with which he was bound and the trade gun lying on a pile of fur beyond the fire, there was not an evidence that the Indian had ever seen or been associated with white men. Everything about the camp was utterly primitive. Such a thing was unheard of. For a thousand miles in every direction the natives had known the Hudson's Bay Company for two hundred years or more. They had abandoned their skin clothing for wool and cotton generations before. Kettles and various trade sundries were indispensable.

As Phil puzzled over this unaccountable fact the Indian reentered the teepee. He piled more fuel on the fire and then began to gnaw at the frozen meat. After a few bites he held the huge piece in the flames until it was blackened and then tore off the melted part in great strips.

To Phil the sight was not disgusting. On more than one instance he had been reduced to fare not much better and he was very hungry. He had not eaten much the night before because of the excitement of Joyce's arrival. It had been very cold and the spectacle of food being eaten brought instant realization of his famished condition.

He did not speak, but the Indian caught his expression and grinned across the fire at him. He held out the huge piece of meat and then withdrew it, chuckling as he saw the disappointment in his prisoner's face.

In that grin and that chuckle Phil found something that brought greater fear than anything that had happened since he had wakened to find himself in the bag. They told him beyond doubt that the man was a maniac. It had shown for an instant in his eyes, in the cunning smirk, in the wild notes of his laugh. Fascinated by the terror of his predicament, Phil watched the man devour pound after pound of raw meat.

The man fairly wallowed in his food. He smeared his face and his hands and his fur clothing with the grease that oozed from between the tissues as the heat of the fire drove out the frost. He pulled with his teeth and his hands until great, dripping, red pieces were torn off. He crowded these into his mouth and gulped them down as does a dog, without chewing.

The quantity of food he consumed was enormous, but the more he ate the more ravenous he became, the more insane the gleam of his eyes when he glanced across the fire at his prisoner. As Phil watched, spellbound, he wondered if the man would ever satisfy a hunger that seemed to grow the more he ate.

The meal ended only when the piece of meat, which Phil estimated had weighed all of ten pounds, was consumed. The Indian wiped the backs of his black, bloody, hairy hands across his face, glared fiercely at his prisoner, threw himself back against the pile of fur and skins behind him and immediately was asleep.

It was more a stupor than a slumber, as Phil soon discovered by experimenting with various noises he was able to make by rattling the chain that held his legs, coughing and rolling about. The Indian had become drunk with an excess of food, was the victim of a gluttonous debauch.

When he was satisfied that his captor would not waken, Phil began to test the thongs and ropes which held him. He strained and pulled but could not gain an inch. He twisted and turned his hands but he could not reach a knot. One attempt showed him that it was utterly impossible for him even to touch the chain that held his feet together.

He did not abandon the effort after the first trial. So long as the light lasted he continued to twist and turn, to tug and jerk. After a few minutes his exertions became frantic, and he rolled and writhed on the ground in a spasm of terror and desperation, ceasing only when exhausted. When his strength began to return he resolved not to use it in so futile a fashion. Rather he became cool and determined. Systematically he attempted to discover some way to free himself. He did not allow himself to be hurried by the fear that the Indian might waken. He knew it was his one chance, that his life and that of Joyce depended upon his success.

But darkness found him no nearer freedom than when he had begun. For at least five hours he had had every oppor-

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tunity to escape. Yet each knot seemed tighter than before, each thong as strong.

THE fire had gone out and Phil became very cold. He was lying on several skins and he managed to work one or two up and around him, but not sufficiently to keep him warm. His hands and feet were soon numb and he suffered far more than when he had been wrapped in the caribou-skin bag on the toboggan.

When he had abandoned his idea of freeing himself he turned his attention to the peculiar facts connected with his imprisonment. He remembered that the Indian had appeared to be perfectly sane until he had begun to eat. At first he had not seemed to be inordinately hungry, but as the meal progressed he had torn at the meat more and more savagely, had gulped larger pieces of it whole, and all the time the insane light in his eyes had increased, until at the end he had glared at his prisoner with blazing ferocity. Food seemed to have made the man mad. Food seemed to have aroused a primitive passion.

Repeatedly Phil found himself reviewing all that he had learned about the people of his district. Sandy had exhausted his store of gossip. Something in it must give a hint as to the identity of this man. To be sure, the secret of the weeteego was solved. But who had become the weeteego? Who of the few Indians in the district had reverted to this deranged creature.

As Phil searched his memory he could not banish from his mind the spectacle of the Indian at his meal, the thought that through food alone had he seemed to become a maniac. Perhaps there lay the explanation. A Winter of starvation, the abandonment of hope, and then the coming of the caribou and the resultant frenzied debauch! It was enough to weaken a man's mind, to make him a monomaniac on the subject of food. Food was all men lived for in the far North. Food meant everything. Its need was constant, imperative, and its absence was an unending peril.

And then the two thoughts coincided. Food and the story Sandy had told of the Indians who had starved to death. Sandy had found the bodies, except that of the head of the family, who had wandered off, presumably in a vain search for food.

Instantly the entire story of the weeteego, his actions, his life alone through two Winters, his strange behavior and the terror it had brought to the fort, all became instantly plain. All except his indomitable determination to make a Hudson's Bay Company man prisoner. Phil saw how the man had been driven insane by the slow extinction of his family and his own craving for food, how the long, cold, foodless Winter had upset his reason and driven him out to wander across the marshes like a wolf. But why had he haunted Fort Dease and why had he captured him?

The cold finally put an end to Phil's conjectures. Slowly the numbness crept up to his brain and at last he lost consciousness.

It was still night when he opened his eyes. A bright fire was burning, his body was warm again but each muscle seemed a bundle of shooting, fiery pains. With difficulty Phil twisted his head and looked across the blaze.

The Indian was sitting quietly beside the fire. He returned Phil's glance calmly, with just a suggestion of the friendly smile of the day before. There was nothing wild or disordered in his eyes or features, and Phil's hopes rose instantly. The man was a monomaniac on the subject of food. If he could catch him in a sane moment he might gain the advantage.

"Wotcher," Phil said calmly, employing the common method of greeting.

The Indian looked up quickly, a new light in his eyes, something as a sailor might have done had he been long absent from the familiar sounds of the sea.

"Solomon Moses," Phil exclaimed sharply.

"Yes," was the slow answer in Cree.

"Where have you been, Solomon Moses?"

"I am dead," was the calm reply.

"How long have you been dead?"

"This is the second Winter."

"Why do you tie the hands and feet of the man who has never harmed you?"

Again the maniacal light flashed in the Indian's eyes, and Phil shivered as he saw it. But when Solomon Moses spoke he was as calm and as sane as his hearer, though he sometimes faltered in choosing a word, as if speaking were an unfamiliar task.

"Two years ago I take my family out for the hunt as I always do, in the same

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place where I have always gone, and where my father and his father hunted. The Hudson's Bay Company has always known where I hunt. In the early Winter the caribou do not come. I wait and wait, for they always have come, and all our fish is gone. My wife and I set snares for rabbits, but there are only a few. Neither are there many ptarmigan. The dogs die because there is nothing for them to eat. The little ones are crying for food and I say to my wife: 'I will go out and find the caribou. In ten days I will come back.'

"But I do not find the caribou and when I come back in two weeks my wife is so weak she can not set snares. I am very weak, but I set some snares and catch two rabbits and leave them with my wife and the three children and go out again and look for the caribou. I find the trail of an Indian hunter and follow it until I come to his camp. He has a little meat and he is going to the fort and he says he will tell them there that I and my family are starving and I have no dogs and can not come in for food. He promised me that and I saw him go.

"I took what little meat he could let me have and went to my camp. My wife could not lift her head, and I gave her the meat for her and the children and went out again to look for the caribou. I was very weak but some days I would kill a ptarmigan.

"At last I get back to my camp. I do not find the caribou, and I am very weak. My wife is lying in the cold teepee, with no fire for she is too weak to get wood, and beside her two of the children are lying dead and the last one is dying. When my wife doesn't see I take one of the children out and cut off some meat from its legs and take it in and put it in the pot and make a soup and feed her, and then I go out again and look for the caribou.

"That week I find two ptarmigan. The next week I find a rabbit. Then I go home, and my camp is still, and my wife and the last child are dead. And the Company has not come with food."

Solomon Moses had spoken quietly, dispassionately, but his story had been so vivid the pathos of it made Phil forget for the moment his own danger. He had only pity for the savage that sat across the fire from him.

But when Solomon Moses spoke again his voice had changed, and the wild light was in his eyes.

"I turn and leave them there because I have not the strength to put them out of the way of the wolves," he said. "I go out until I can not walk, and I lie down in the snow and die. And then my spirit sees a caribou, and another, and more and more, and I am in the middle of the herd, and my spirit kills many of them and feasts and grows fat. And when I have grown fat with the meat I remember my wife and children and I say:

" 'They are dead, dead because the Company did not send food when it was told they were starving and that I had no dogs to go to the fort. It is the Company that killed them, and it is the Company that must pay. I will go to Fort Dease, and I will take the man there and carry him off and tie him up where no one can find him and where he can never get away, and I will keep him there and watch the hunger come and tear him. I will sit beside him and eat, and I will never give him any, and when he asks for meat I will laugh. After a while he will be like my wife and children when I find them in my camp, cold and hard and white like the pieces of ice that stick up on the shore of the salt water."

CHAPTER XI

THE SPLINTERED BONE

THE effect of Solomon Moses's story upon Phil was paralyzing because of the very horror and hopelessness of his position. Unable to escape, watched by a cunning, half-crazed savage, already suffering from exposure and hunger and his nerves shaken by the trying ordeal of the long Winter, he was ill-prepared to meet a desperate situation.

The grim motive back of his captor's actions, the passion of the primitive man for revenge, the cunning with which his project had been carried out, the indomitable patience that had carried him past every failure and through two long Winters, each in itself was enough to cause complete despair.

But, critical as was his position, after the first quick panic Phil's courage returned. At last he knew the danger he faced. At last there was no mystery, nothing spectral, nothing suggestive of the supernatural.

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There was no longer an unknown to dread, no longer any uncertainty. For the first time since he had seen the prints of bare feet in the mud the previous Fall, weirdness, stealth, suspense and nameless hazard were absent. Everything was out in the open, plain, understandable. The very reality of his danger served to give Phil a cool, clear brain, even a slight assurance.

Then, too, he grasped the situation as a whole. He saw that it was not alone his safety, his life. His vision clear of dread and mystery, he saw that upon him alone depended the safety of Joyce and the success of the territory of which he was in charge. He must escape and protect her and he must round up the hunters before they went to the opposition down the bay.

Phil did not waste any time. Twelve years of close contact with the natives had given him a thorough knowledge of Indian psychology, a complete understanding of the Indian character. He did not undervalue the red man's ability, as many white men are prone to do, nor did he allow romantic misconceptions to overrate it.

To Phil the Indian was what he really is, a child, with all a child's fears, all a child's lack of control of primitive passions. To Phil, too, he was the child accustomed through generations to accepting the advice and guidance of the Hudson's Bay Company, even to submitting to its reprimands.

He did not believe that Solomon Moses was insane except possibly on the one subject of food. An Indian can make himself believe many things, can bring about a state of mind that borders upon or gives the impression of insanity, a condition from which he can be jolted back to the normal.

"Look here," snapped Phil in Cree, "you can't do this, Solomon Moses. You'll get caught. You'll be hung. The police and the Company men will come, and there will be an end of you."

"There is no one to come."

"There is. A dog team just came to Fort Dease, driven by an Indian, and he said four teams with white men were only a day behind him. They will track you to this place and take you."

"But they can not take a spirit. I am dead."

"You know you are not dead. You only try to think you are. If you are dead, put your hand in the fire there and see if it will burn."

The Indian did not reply and his eyes wavered as had many a hunter's when Phil lectured him on laziness or extravagance or failure to pay his debt. It was the first point in Phil's favor and consciously now he continued the rôle he had naturally assumed, that of father of his flock.

"You can't fool me, Solomon Moses," he exclaimed confidently. "You went out and found the caribou and killed and ate. You did not die. You only tried to think you were dead. You have lived alone ever since and have not gone among your people and your brain has become soft and you do foolish things. A little boy would know that he can not kill a white man, especially a Company man, and live."

The Indian had lapsed into the sullen, silent mood characteristic of his people when criticized. It is not unlike that of a spoiled child, and though it gives the impression of hopeless perversity, it did not deceive Phil.

"Those white men and the Indians are looking for me now," he continued. "The Indians are with them to track you and the toboggan. They will surely come before I starve to death, and when I tell them what you have done they will find you or the policemen will come from the West. You know that they never fail."

Solomon Moses did not look up from the fire, did not indicate that he had heard.

"Come," Phil commanded. "Take off these thongs. Take them off and give me something to eat and something to keep out the cold."

There was a slight, uneasy shifting of the Indian's position and Phil immediately pressed his advantage.

"See here," he said, "you were a good hunter and you would like to return to the hunt and get debt from the Company. You have not gone back because you have a debt and no furs to pay. The Company is not angry because of what you have done. The Company knows you had a bad spirit and that it made you do things you did not want to do. Take off these thongs and go back to the fort with me and I will give you a fresh debt and I will tear out of the book the page which shows your old debt. If any one asks where you have been, or what you have done, I will tell them that an evil spirit captured you and took you off and that I went after you and killed the bad spirit and brought you back with me.

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"You can go to the fort and get a new gun and a new knife, and blankets and tea and sugar and clothes so that you will be warm and dry and have a full belly and smoke a pipe again. And you can see the other Indians at the fort and laugh and talk with them and have a good time, and find a new squaw and have a camp and more children."

Solomon Moses jumped to his feet, his eyes blazing, his face distorted with rage. Phil saw his mistake instantly. His eloquence had carried him too far. He had touched the two things that routed his captor's sanity.

"I had a good squaw!" the Indian cried fiercely. "I had a camp and fine children. I had tea and sugar and a new gun and tobacco. And the Company killed my squaw and my children and took everything from me, and the Company will pay. You will starve."

As he danced in anger beside the fire his head struck a piece of meat that hung from one of the teepee-poles. He glanced up at it. In that moment his frenzy vanished to leave him in the grip of another passion. He grasped the meat hungrily, though he had just awakened from the sleep induced by his last gorge, and began to devour it as if he were starving.

Phil was fascinated by the spectacle. The man appeared to be famished, and he tore and gulped great strips and chunks of meat. That stoicism which only the Indian can assume was gone. The wild light of the day before reappeared in his eyes. His features became bestial. He was insane with the fear of hunger.

Phil sank back hopelessly. Arguments would be worthless now. The man had been unbalanced by his experience of two years before and never could be counted upon so long as the sight or mention of food would upset his mind in this fashion. The prestige of the Company, the superior mental power of a white man, could not avail against an irrational passion.

The meat devoured, Solomon Moses dropped on to the pile of skins and furs and was instantly asleep. As Phil looked at the black grease-smeared face, the great, hairy, paw-like hands, the primitive clothing of half-tanned pelts, he was seized with sudden anger at the thought of being in the power of such a creature. He, an intelligent white man with a trained mind and controlled passions, the plaything of this savage, hare-brained brute! In sudden exasperation and revolt he turned and twisted and tugged at his bonds.

His struggle ceased almost immediately when he realized that he was only reducing himself to the untamed level of Solomon Moses. If he had this vaunted superiority, the gift of civilization, why not make it effective? Why should not his superior mentality prevail over what was only brute cunning?

He sat up to be nearer the slowly dying fire and began to go over the situation point by point. While the Indian lay in a stupor he must free himself from the thongs and the chain. It was a long time since he had eaten. He could live for many days without food but another freezing such as he had suffered while the Indian was asleep before and his strength might be depleted to the point where freedom from his bonds would be only a mockery.

But try and scheme as he did, Phil was unable to loosen a knot. He could not reach one with his fingers, and there was no rough surface of any kind near him against which he could wear the strips of leather. And always he was confronted with the knowledge that, once his hands were free, he still had the problem of his chain-bound ankles. He could not walk with his feet tied so closely together, and he did not believe he could ever unloosen the tangled knots.

Still, only through freeing his hands was there any hope. He twisted on to his side until he could reach the belt about his body with the forefinger of his right hand. It was only a leather strap, an inch wide, and he began to scratch and scratch. If he could wear it through he could get his hands together and the knots that held them would be easy.

THE fire went out and the cold was intense. His hands became numb, and he shivered uncontrollably. In one of these spasms he dug against the tight strap with his nail and broke it off in the quick. Immediately Phil turned over to make the same attempt with his other forefinger. But there the thong was a little shorter and he could not reach.

He bent his head in a vain effort to reach the belt with his teeth. He thrust aside all the skins upon which he lay, thinking he could wear through the belt by rubbing it

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against the frozen ground. But the strap had been tied tightly so that it was protected by his thick clothing and he could not touch it to the earth.

By the time Phil had abandoned this effort he was so numb with cold he was unable to do anything more. As best he could he scraped the skins back beneath him and drew others over him. Shivering, numbed, half conscious, he saw the dawn of the second day come, but before it was full daylight he had succumbed.

Again Phil was wakened by the shooting, twitching pains of warming muscles. He opened his eyes to see Solomon Moses once more sitting on the other side of a roaring fire. Only this time there was no friendly little smile for the prisoner. Instead, the man seemed not to have recovered from his mania. He glared through the smoke at his prisoner and when he saw Phil's painful movements he laughed wildly.

"My squaw lay in the teepee without a fire," he chuckled. "She was too weak to go out for wood, and the children were beside her, dying of the cold and the hunger."

He sprang to his feet, picked up a piece of meat and held it temptingly a few inches from Phil's mouth. He took a knife from the mass of skins behind him and made a motion as if to sever his prisoner's bonds. When he saw the sudden gleam in Phil's eyes aroused by the sight of a cutting instrument he thrust it into the ground on his side of the fire, out of the white man's reach but where he could always see it.

The spirit of torture aroused, he took small pieces of meat and hung them from the teepee-poles above Phil's head and high enough so that there was no possibility of his ever reaching them. He set another piece beside the knife and so close to the fire it began to crinkle and sizzle in the heat, filling the teepee with an odor that was maddening to Phil. He could not help but sniff hungrily, and Solomon saw him and grinned delightedly.

The Indian began at once a search for more meat. He tumbled back the pile of skins, rolling pieces of bone on the ground beside the fire. He pawed these over, ribs, shoulder-blades, long thigh-bones, some of them cracked and splintered. But he did not find more meat. He stood up, looked around the teepee and then at his prisoner.

"The caribou do not come," he said vacantly. "I will go out and find them. In ten days I will return."

"No!" cried Phil involuntarily. "I'll freeze to death!"

It seemed to arouse Solomon from his sudden trance, but the demoniacal glitter was sill in his eyes when he said:

"No, you will not freeze. I will return to build up the fire before the cold reaches your heart. It is not the cold but the hunger that will tear out your heart and leave you like the pieces of ice on the shore of the sea. You will starve, but I must eat. I must have much meat. There is plenty at my other camp, and I will go for it. It is far, but I will be back before the cold reaches your heart. And while I am going I will leave these to keep you company," and he pointed at the small swinging pieces of meat and at the knife thrust into the ground beside the fire.

For an instant he seemed to be gaging Phil's bonds and the distance from the knife. Then he laughed.

"Maybe you can get the knife," he said. "I will let you try. But even if you did," and he pointed to the chain and chuckled proudly. "I found the white man's leather and it can not be broken. With it on you can not go far."

He went out and Phil heard him take his toboggan from where it hung in a tree. He heard the crunch of his snow-shoes as Solomon hurried away, and in a few moments there was no sound except the occasional crackling of the dying fire.

For a long time Phil lay there, slowly working his legs and arms until the sharp pains began to diminish and he had better use of his muscles. He was weak from exposure and hunger, yet his spirit had been fired by the absence of the crazed Solomon, while the sight of the knife was inspiring rather than tantalizing. It was out of his reach, and yet he knew that he must get it, that ultimately he would, and he began to plan.

Phil saw at once that he would have to wait until the fire had burned out and no coals were left. The knife was directly across the blaze. It appeared to be hopelessly beyond reach, but there was the possibility that, by tugging and turning, he could reach it with his mouth. His body was not restrained from the waist up, and he need only fall across the fire to bring his face close to the blade.

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Impatiently he watched the flame die down, saw the bright embers turn to gray and crumble. The cold was still intense but he did not feel it. He tried to be calm and yet every little while he cursed the coals that still glowed between him and the knife.

Then, struck with a sudden idea, he turned quickly on his side, caught up a piece of untanned caribou hide with his teeth and with a jerk of his head flung it over the fire. Exultantly he sat up, worked over as near to the knife as possible and then threw himself out toward it.

Instantly the door of the teepee was darkened, the low shelter shook with peals of demoniacal laughter, and a black, hairy hand snatched the blade past Phil's nose. Again there was a wild laugh and Phil saw Solomon Moses running out of the teepee, waving the knife above his head and shrieking like a fiend.

With difficulty Phil drew himself back from the smoking hide and lay listening to the Indian as he went farther and farther away. At last there was silence, and then from a distance came the old familiar howl that had made many a night hideous at Fort Dease. After a minute it came again, still more distant. The man really was going away. In his absence there was still a chance to escape.

Phil looked at the hole the blade had made in the ground, cursing because it was not still there. It had been almost within his grasp. Solomon Moses could not have thought of a greater act of torture than the one he had just perpetrated.

And then Phil saw something that brought him up to a sitting position with a jerk. Beside where the knife had been thrust into the ground was a long, sharp splinter of the thigh-bone of a caribou. With it any piece of leather could be sawed through. With it he could free himself in five minutes.

Recklessly he threw himself out on to the burning hide over the coals, stretched his head as far as he could and opened his mouth. The bone was two inches beyond.

He crawled back and threw himself out again, extending his body to the utmost, only to have his lips still an inch from the sliver of bone. Again and again he tried it, until at last he was so exhausted he could not come within three inches.

For a time he rested. Then he began to experiment with different positions. He worked slowly now, and carefully, but not once was he able to better his second attempt. An inch still intervened between his lips and the bone.

As Phil lay resting from his exertions, studying the piece of bone that had so accidentally tumbled to its aggravating position, the cold struck in and he shivered. Without the bone he could not get free. And if he did not liberate himself before Solomon's return there was no hope. As he lay there panting, the steam arose from his nose and mouth in regular puffs. Phil watched it absently and then suddenly sat upright. He stared at the bone for an instant and then with a contented smile lay down and covered himself as best he could with the skins behind him.

Quite patiently he waited an hour and then another, until the bitter cold had completely chilled everything in the teepee. At last, stiff and numb, he sat up, worked over toward the fire as far as he could, threw himself across the now dead ashes, craned his neck to the limit and then deliberately thrust out his tongue until the tip touched the cold bone. After holding it there for several seconds he began to draw it in. Slowly the bone followed until with a hungry snap Phil caught it between his teeth.

There was a sharp pain in his tongue as the skin which had been frozen to the bone was wrenched loose, but he only grinned and bent his head until his right hand had clasped the splinter. In less than two minutes the thongs had been cut and he was standing up, bound only by the chain about his ankles.

CHAPTER XII

PHIL REFUSES HELP

PHIL had some matches in a trousers pocket and his first act was to start a fire. There were only a few sticks of wood in the teepee, but he warmed himself as best he could with these and then began to examine the chain that bound his ankles together.

As he had expected, the knots were hopeless. The peculiar shape and size of the links lent themselves to quick bends and an inextricable tangle. The metal chilled his fingers until they were numb and useless. And then luck came to his aid.

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Phil knew that the bit of a steel ax would break in cold weather on striking a hard knot. He did not know that most chain is made of wrought iron, not steel. This particular bit of chain, which Solomon Moses had picked up one night at Fort Dease, happened to be steel. Phil did not know this, and he was too ignorant of metals to find out. But there were several rocks inside the teepee, loosened from the soil by the fire, and in a moment he was sitting on the ground, one stone between his ankles and beneath the chain, and the other poised in both hands above it. He brought it down once over a link and shattered it into three pieces.

Phil kicked his feet far apart with a shout of triumph.

In five minutes he had selected a pair of worn fur mittens and a long skin coat from the mass of half-tanned pelts on which Solomon Moses had slept, had set a piece of meat near the fire to thaw, and had made a pack of all the available skins that would serve as a sleeping-robe. In the center of the pack he placed the few small pieces of frozen caribou flesh that the Indian had hung about the teepee to tantalize his prisoner.

Alternately gnawing and tearing at the melted sides and placing the meat near the fire to thaw again, Phil managed to consume between three and four pounds in half an hour. Then he swung the pack over one shoulder and left the teepee.

Two trails led from the door. He knew he had been brought in on that from the left. He knew that Solomon Moses had departed on the other. There was no chance for a mistake and at once he started off on the trail to the left.

But as he walked on beneath the small spruce his courage began to fail. He knew that he was more than one hundred miles from Fort Dease. Otherwise there could be no timber. With the chain clanking about his ankles, with his meager supply of meat, without snow-shoes if a storm should come, without any knowledge of where he was, the situation was desperate. The extreme exaltation aroused by regaining his liberty was too great, however, to permit Phil to remain disheartened.

"It's make it or starve," he said aloud, and then he added confidently—"And if it doesn't snow to cover up the trail I'll make it."

He walked on rapidly, for his circulation was still sluggish, but one hundred yards from the teepee he halted in amazement. He was out of the forest, out on the big barren waste that bordered the bay, and less than a mile in front of him was the shore of the inland sea itself.

"I thought it was funny that Indian could have dragged me a hundred and fifty miles when I figured it was no more than thirty!" he exclaimed aloud. "But what on earth are trees doing down here?"

He went on and after a quarter of a mile looked back to see that he had been held prisoner in a small patch of stunted spruce that had the appearance of an island in the vast, white desert.

"Probably was an island in the bay when the shore was a hundred miles farther back," Phil thought as he started on. "And it's probably a few million years older than the land around it."

As he approached the shore he realized that a serious problem must be solved at once. When Solomon Moses had spun the toboggan around and around and had covered Phil's face with a piece of leather, he had made it impossible for his prisoner to know whether he had been carried southeast or northwest from Fort Dease. It was equally impossible for Phil to know now whether he was northwest or southeast of the fort. He knew the ice on the bay, or the snow where it had not been swept off by the wind, would not show a mark of the toboggan.

"It's an even chance either way," he thought as he struck the shore ice and looked first one way and then the other. "I suppose I'm lucky to have the possibilities equal."

In the old days he would have started off at once, gladly availing himself of a situation of even chances. Now the thought of Joyce alone at Fort Dease made him hesitate and brought an end to his exhiliration. He must not take even a half chance in the matter. To reach and protect Joyce, to save Fort Dease to the Hudson's Bay Company, he must be absolutely certain.

Standing there, he studied the situation. Not a factor which might help him to determine directions was forgotten. He reviewed everything that had happened since Solomon Moses had first left the prints of his bare feet in the mud the pre-

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vious Fall. He recalled everything he had heard about the Indian, all Sandy had told him and all that he knew of the district. He analyzed each of the cunning tricks Solomon had employed, deducted the entire life of the monomaniac in the last two years.

At the end two things were fixed in his mind. The weeteego had always howled from the marshes off the south of Fort Dease. The weird wails had grown faint always in that same direction. But Solomon had always been careful to come only when a storm would cover his tracks. He had never overlooked anything to keep his identity and his whereabouts a secret. Therefore, his leaving always in the one direction was a blind.

Secondly, before Solomon's family had been wiped out by starvation he had hunted near Berens River. It had been his father's hunting territory. Naturally, he would remain there, for no one would suspect his presence in it, and no one would ever cross it. Further, he would have to live in the timber country far to the south or west to get food. The camp in the island of spruce was only a temporary refuge from which he had carried on his operations against Fort Dease. The trail by which he had departed that morning had led toward the west, toward Berens River.

Instantly the whole thing became clear to Phil. The island of spruce was northwest of Fort Dease. It was the only logical place for Solomon's camp. With perfect confidence Phil turned along the shore to the southeast.

Through the long hours of the night he did not stop. Walking as fast as he could, often breaking into the easy, shuffling gait of the dog driver, he kept on. But the pace could not last. The chain knotted at each ankle became more and more of a hindrance. It began to chafe his legs as the knots swung back and forth with each step. In time, as Phil's knees grew weary, the unaccustomed weight served to throw him off his balance as he stumbled over the uneven surface in the dark.

The exhilaration with which he had started, even though it were heightened by his certainty that he was taking the right direction, was not sufficient to spur cramped, sore, tired muscles through many miles. By midnight his pace had slowed down to a bare two miles an hour. By four o'clock in the morning it was with difficulty that he kept moving at all.

There have been many instances of men continuing to travel when strength seems completely exhausted, and Phil furnished still another. He was carried on by the desire to live, by the desire to reach Joyce, by the desire to serve the Company. He cursed the chain as he stumbled forward. He cursed his own physical weakness. He cursed Solomon Moses. He cursed Wickson. And because the cursing seemed to help, he cursed again and again. It took his mind off his physical self, and he went back so far as his schooldays and cursed a weazened, sour, uninspiring little teacher who had never done anything more than make one sarcastic remark relative to Phil's lack of proficiency in mathematics.

And, still cursing, he came to the mouth of Cut Bank River and Fort Dease. At the first indication of dawn—for days and nights would soon be of equal length—he saw the squat, desolate, insignificant little buildings perched on the edge of the stream, but to him there never was a more welcome sight. Forgetting the chains, he went quickly up the slope, through the side gate and across to the kitchen door.

There was no light, but he had not expected one. Joyce was asleep but she must be wakened. As he neared the door he called:

"Joyce! Oh, Joyce!"

He paused outside to listen. There was no answer.

"Joyce!" he repeated. "Wake up! I'm back!"

Still there was no sound from his bedroom and anxiously he opened the door and entered. He struck a match, but there was no lamp in the kitchen, and he clanked across the floor and into the living-room.

"Joyce!" he called again. "Joyce! Are you here?"

THE place was deathly still as he stared about the room. Then the match burned his fingers. He struck another and went forward to the table. As it flared up and he was about to lift the chimney from the lamp he saw the long butcher-knife from the kitchen sticking straight up in the reading-table and squarely in the center of several sheets of

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paper. His first glance took in the line at the top, in a hand unmistakably feminine:

To whoever comes to Fort Dease and finds this:

His fingers trembling from sudden fear, Phil touched the match to the wick, replaced the chimney and then began to read:

To whoever comes to Fort Dease and finds this: I, Joyce Plummer, until recently serving as governess to the children of Mr. Osborne, manager of the Hudson's Bay Company's post at Savant House, arrived at Fort Dease on the first day of March, having traveled the last two days alone because the two Indians who came with me refused to go farther on the grounds that a weeteego, or some form of evil spirit, haunted Fort Dease.

Less than a quarter of a mile from the fort, and when it was dark and storming very hard, I heard this weeteego shrieking and the next moment it almost ran into me, turning off when it saw me and my dog-team and howling as it ran. I called, and was answered by Mr. Philip Boynton, manager of Fort Dease, who was pursuing the weeteego after it had attempted to enter the dwelling-house. Mr. Boynton heard me and helped me reach the fort.

I wish to say here that I am engaged to be married to Mr. Boynton and that I made the journey to Fort Dease from Savant House because I believed that he was in danger. This belief was not shared by any one else, despite the fact that the former manager had been taken out with an unsound mind because of his experiences here and the additional fact that Mr. Boynton's servant, Sandy Thunder, deserted him in November, leaving him alone at the fort until my arrival.

I wish to state further that I found Mr. Boynton nearly exhausted, both nervously and physically, by his experiences of the Winter and that, though he did not wish to tell me at first, he was practically in a state of seige. On several occasions the weeteego, as I call it, has gained entrance to the dwelling-house, once being driven off only after a terrible struggle. It always came when there was a big storm so that it could not be traced. It never attempted to steal anything. Mr. Boynton had no knowledge of what or who it could be, whether mentally unsound, of criminal intent, white or red. Three times Mr. Boynton fired at it while it was trying to open the kitchen door, as the door will show.

Soon after my arrival the night of March first, the storm ceased and the sky became clear and the temperature very low. Mr. Boynton did not expect an attack but nevertheless he barricaded the kitchen door and, though he told me he would sleep in the living-room, he did not lie down but sat up on the couch. I wakened in the night and went out and saw that he had gone to sleep and fallen over, and I laid a blanket over him.

When I wakened again it was broad daylight. I thought that strange, as we were to start early that morning for Mr. Lowry's nearest outpost as Mr. Boynton had to round up his hunters, all of whom, with about twenty thousand dollars' worth of Company goods, were not intending to return to Fort Dease but were going with their fur to the opposition up the shore of the bay.

I called his name, but there was no answer, so I dressed and went out. The kitchen door was open and a window had been taken out, sash and all. Outside in the fresh snow were tracks that told unmistakably that the weeteego had come in the night, had made Mr. Boynton prisoner and had carried him away on a toboggan. I followed the toboggan track down to the shore of the bay. There was no sign there on the hard crust and ice to tell in which direction he had been taken. I could only see, by the tracks at the house, that the weeteego had no dogs but had drawn his toboggan himself, and I knew therefore, that he could not have gone very far.

I returned to the dwelling-house, started a fire for breakfast and have written this. After I have eaten I will hitch up the dogs and start northwest along the shore and try to see where Mr. Boynton has been taken, and, if possible, set him free.

Here Joyce signed her name, but there was more beneath it:

March third: I followed the shore toward the northwest all yesterday but could not see a sign of any one having traveled that way nor of any one having left the ice to go on to the shore. I concluded that I had taken the wrong direction and the next day returned to Fort Dease. Tomorrow morning I will start along the shore to the southeast and will keep on until I find a trace of him.

For a full minute Phil did not move. He had been leaning with both hands on the table, his head bent forward, and it sank still lower as he stared at the last sheet. Joyce, out there on the shore ice, going farther and farther away, even then probably breaking camp and pressing on in search of him! Joyce, a long day ahead of him, the certain victim of the first storm that would sweep down the coast! No shelter, no fuel, nothing to guide her if the thick snow should come! A team of half-wild dogs that might even now have run away from her, leaving her without food or robes!

Slowly, absently, he rearranged the sheets of paper, thrust the knife back into the hole it had made and pressed it into the table. Listlessly he turned away, and then with a leap that carried him half-way to the door he started for the kitchen and began building a fire. He rushed outside and filled a pail with snow and set it on the stove and then started a fire in the living-room stove. Back in the kitchen again he searched in the cupboard and found a file he had used to sharpen the butcher-knife. He hurried back to the living-room and, seated on the floor beside the now-roaring heater, he began sawing away at a link of the chain around one ankle.

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For an hour and a half Phil filed and cooked and filed and ate, and when he had finished eating he filed until his hands were cramped and his arms ached. But at last both legs were free.

An additional half hour was necessary for his preparations. He had thrown off the odorous skins he had worn from Solomon Moses's camp and now he clad himself in his own Winter costume. He gathered food and some fuel, a pail and two rabbit-skin blankets and lashed them all on a small toboggan which had been hanging in the trade shop. He tied his snow-shoes on top and then searched the house for his rifle. When he did not find it he decided that Joyce must have taken it. So he got between the traces, started down the slope to the shore ice and set off at a trot toward the southeast.

The monotony of travel brought opportunity for reflection. The first thing that occurred to him was his failure to add a postscript to Joyce's message. Otherwise, any one coming the next Summer would never learn what had happened to him. It was not of sufficient importance even to consider turning back, however, and he went on, his mind busy with the possibilities of his catching Joyce.

Phil admitted readily to himself that the situation was about as hopeless as had been his own position when lying prisoner in Solomon Moses's camp. This was the fourth day of clear, fair weather. The temperature was fifty or more below each night, but that was nothing compared to the storms that generally sweep the coast. With no wind a man can survive. With a blizzard howling down across the six or seven hundred miles of unobstructed bay, with no shelter within a hundred miles, with no fuel, a northman would have a difficult time of it. Joyce would be easy prey, while he, on the verge of exhaustion, could not fare better.

All day as he hurried on he watched the sky as much as the ice ahead of him. Granted that he could keep on, granted that the good weather held, he could not hope to overtake Joyce until two days and two nights had passed. Then, even if she still had the dogs, a day and night at least would be required for the return journey. And to expect seven days without a storm! It was preposterous.

Despite the hopelessness of it, despite the fear that grew and grew, despite his own weariness and the slower and slower pace, Phil kept doggedly at it until nearly dark. Then he stopped only long enough to get a bite to eat. Night found him again plodding on, keeping at the edge of the hard going, watching always, to the right, the left and ahead, even stopping occasionally to call.

MIDNIGHT came and he began to debate with himself the advisability of resting until morning. But always the thought that when morning came Joyce would be resuming her journey ahead of him brought a new resolution.

Later he began to consider whether he should not go on without his toboggan. It was becoming unbearably heavy. And Joyce had surely taken plenty of food and robes. Any girl who would have the courage to undertake such a journey would have brains enough to go well provided when she had dogs to pull all she needed. Then the thought would come: "What if the dogs ran away with the toboggan and left her?" He would stumble on, tugging harder at his load.

Under such conditions it is invariably the case that a man's mind goes first. When that vague thing called a spirit maintains its relentless urging, when muscles continue to contract long after the last reserve of power seems to have been tapped, visions come, strange, vague, oppressive thoughts that flit and flare and mock and madden.

They came to Phil, intermittently at first, and he brought all his mental energy to bear in an attempt to fight them off. He knew too well that they would only hasten the end, that in their grip he might wander out to sea on the ice or pass Joyce on the shore.

But they came back to taunt him. Once they made him see Joyce just ahead and he ran forward, crying her name, until he tripped and fell and recovered his senses. Once he heard the yelp of her dogs, her dogs running away, and he shouted hoarse commands.

Then, so clearly it startled him, he heard the tinkle of a sleigh-bell. It stopped him short, and he looked eagerly behind and on each side. He hesitated, *then* laughed bitterly and started on. Again he heard the bell. He knew it was a delusion, but he stopped again.

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The tinkle came once more, from the rear, and he wheeled about. As he stood there, swaying with weakness, he saw a dark object on the ice rushing toward him. But he thought it only another delusion and turned to start on again. The bell sounded nearer, but he ignored it.

"Joyce! Joyce!" came in a great voice from behind him. "Joyce! Wait! I'm coming!"

Phil wheeled, every nerve tense, the delusions scattered by the reality of that voice, by the knowledge of whose voice it was. As he stood there a dog-team dashed up and was halted at his side. A man came running forward to peer into his face.

"Damn you, Wickson!" Phil cried. "Go back! Keep out! You started this but you can't see the finish."

CHAPTER XIII

"SHE DID THAT TO ME"

PHIL drew back his right fist, swung viciously at Wickson's face, missed, whirled himself off his feet and sprawled out on the ice.

He did not get up. The sudden, excessive effort had sapped the last of his strength. The quick blaze of anger had completed the work of exposure, anxiety, loss of sleep and terrific exertion.

When he recovered consciousness day had come and he was being bumped along as he had been when Solomon Moses had carried him away. For a moment he believed that he was again in the Indian's power.

But there was no covering over his face. Instead of the soft, padding shuffle of Solomon's hairy boots there came the quick, scratching sound of many small feet. He was only half reclining, and he lifted his head to see five weary dogs between the traces and at their head the vigorous, swiftly moving figure of John Wickson.

For a time he was content to lie where he was. He did not let the superintendent know that he was awake, but after a few minutes Wickson turned and saw that Phil's eyes were open. Immediately he halted the team and walked back.

"We'd better have something to eat," he said as he began to undo the lashings that held Phil to the toboggan. "I've been waiting until you came to. Feel any better?"

"A little."

Wickson spread some robes on the ice.

"Lie down on these," he commanded, "while I get a lunch. Guess we won't bother with tea. We may need the wood later. Looks like a storm."

Phil did not comment while Wickson drew some frozen bannock and meat from his grub-box. The mention of a storm had brought back with added force the seriousness of Joyce's predicament. He watched the sky anxiously, noted the direction of the wind, argued with his better judgment that the storm would not strike before noon.

He was hungry, too, and when Wickson handed him his portion of frozen food he began to gnaw at it as voraciously as had Solomon Moses. After the meal the superintendent asked his first question.

"How did you get loose? Kill him?"

"No. He went away and I cut the straps."

"Couldn't get the chains off, eh?"

"You saw them at the fort!"

"Yes. Didn't see any signs of Miss Plummer on your way back?"

"No. I traveled in the night. She probably turned back before she got as far as I was."

"Well, we mustn't lose any time now. Want me to tie you on?"

"No, I can stick."

Phil wrapped the robes about him and sat down on the toboggan, leaning back against the load. Wickson went to the head of the team and started on at once. For an hour he did not falter. Then he called back, only half turning his head:

"I think I see her."

Wickson, because he was on his feet, had the larger horizon, and it was some time before Phil, too, saw a dark spot on the ice ahead of them.

"Can you make her out?" he demanded.

"Not yet."

After a while Wickson called back again:

"She's not there. It's only the dogs, all tangled in a bunch."

Phil raised himself to get a better view. The thing he had feared had happened. Joyce might still be many miles away, more miles than they could cover before the storm struck them. The wind was gaining in force constantly and he could feel the cold through his robes. If Joyce had been thrown and hurt when her team

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broke away, if she had been left lying on the ice, she would be dead if they did reach her.

Wickson had increased his pace and in fifteen minutes he halted the team fifty yards from the dogs ahead of them. Phil got to his feet to look. Perhaps Joyce lay on the other side of the little knot of dogs.

Wickson was already half way there, and Phil tipped over the toboggan on which he had been riding and his own, which Wickson had tied at the rear. The team thus anchored, he ran ahead.

"Got loose this morning probably when she was hitching them up," commented the superintendent, who was already busy untangling the harness. "You can see they weren't hitched to the toboggan. They look in good shape, so she probably fed them last night. And she can't be many miles ahead, for these fellows couldn't have gone far without getting in a mess like this."

Phil did not comment. He had seen everything that Wickson had. He had also seen the first driving flakes of the storm. To the north a white curtain shut out the sky and the ice, and he wheeled anxiously toward the southeast for a last look before his view would be cut off in that direction. But nowhere was the gray surface of the land and sea broken by the tiniest point of black.

Phil's eyes became blurred. Somewhere down there, perhaps injured, perhaps now dead, perhaps struggling helplessly on in search of him, was Joyce. Suddenly he was crazed by the thought of it. The very impotency of any human agency in the face of nature as she was about to manifest herself, the monstrous injustice of Joyce's plight, the horrible death that was inevitably hers, all served to bring a blinding, uncontrollable rage.

His fists clenched, he wheeled upon Wickson, who was bending over a twisted trace. He took a step forward, then stopped.

"Wickson," he said, "look here."

The superintendent whirled quickly, for, though Phil had spoken quietly, there was a tense, unnatural note in his voice.

"I'm going on, even if there isn't a chance," Phil continued. "I've got to go on. I've got to make sure. You go back."

"I won't do anything of the sort."

"You will, Wickson. Because, if you come with me, and we find her, find her too late, or if we don't find her at all, I'm going to kill you. You'd better go now while you have the chance."

If Phil had spoken wildly, had shouted or cursed, Wickson would have ignored him. But he was deadly quiet, deadly in earnest, and there was no escaping the fact that he meant every word he said.

"You started all this, Wickson," Phil continued. "If she is dead it is you that killed her, and I'll kill you. You call yourself a Hudson's Bay man. You pose as a faithful servant of the Company. But there never was a man in the service who betrayed the Company to help himself as you have done. There have been cowards and thieves and crooks, but not one of them ever left a Company man to die when they might have sent help, or let a woman go out and do what the Company should have done. The Company has always protected its men, and they have always protected each other, have always stood together. But you, to get me out of the way, to get what you thought would be a clear field, risked everything except your own hide.

"But you're going to be paid for it. After this storm I'll kill you if you're here. And if you get back, and I get back, I'll follow you until I find you, and then I'll kill you."

As the first rushing, driving, stinging blast of the storm struck them the two men stood facing each other. Phil stared the hatred that had not been in his voice, but Wickson seemed not to have heard. He looked at Phil's face absently, as if his thoughts were elsewhere.

"I believe you would," he said at last. "But we've got to get started."

Phil reached for the collar of Joyce's leader and dragged the team back to his own toboggan. He hooked up the traces, saw that his load was secure and spoke sharply to the dogs.

"Get on your toboggan," commanded Wickson gruffly as he ran up and tied a line to the collar of Phil's leader and made him fast to the rear of his own sleigh.

"Untie that dog!" Phil cried as he sprang forward. "You heard what I said!"

"Get on your toboggan," repeated the superintendent. "You're in no shape to travel. And don't waste time."

Phil stepped close to Wickson and stared at him.

"You heard what I said?"

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"Yes, but get on your toboggan. Hurry, man! There's a chance."

His last word brought Phil to a realization of the selfishness of his hatred. There was a chance, though it were only one in a million, but as long as that chance existed other things must wait.

"Go on!" he exclaimed as he turned back to his toboggan. Half-way he wheeled and shouted:

"But what I said still holds!"

Wickson nodded as he ran to the head of his team and started on down the shore.

For an hour they traveled thus, each man straining his eyes in an effort to pierce the gray veil that surrounded them. Phil had an unstable seat on his little toboggan, and the wind began to find crevices through which it reached his body. At last when he was so stiff that he could no longer hang on he rolled off, got to his feet and ran ahead until he was beside Wickson.

"This is getting too thick," he panted. "I'll take my team and stay close inshore, and you take the other and keep a little farther out. We might pass her this way."

"If you can do it," said Wickson. "But don't get out of sight or we'll never find each other."

He stopped the dogs and Phil untied his leader.

"Keep me in sight all the time," cautioned Wickson as they started.

FOR another hour they went on, always at a trot, always searching the ice and the low, level shore, Phil, because he had the inside course, and because his anxiety was so great, glanced only seldom toward the other dog-team. Sometimes it disappeared in a thickening burst of the storm. Sometimes it was ahead, sometimes behind, and when it stopped short he did not know but pressed on.

For Wickson had found Joyce. Stumbling blindly along in the smother, far out from shore, he had caught a glimpse of her on his left and had wheeled immediately. When he drew up beside her he glanced back and saw Phil's team disappear in the gray curtain down the wind.

"You!" cried Joyce when she saw who it was.

Wickson looked down at the face framed by the hood of dark fur, at the eyes lighted by overwhelming relief. He trembled when she reached out and grasped his hand and smiled up at him, and at once he forgot everything, everything except the presence of this woman there beside him, the fact that he had found her, that he could save her, that . . . .

He glanced quickly over his shoulder. Phil had disappeared in the storm down the shore, was going on and on. There would be only one result. There was nothing back there at Fort Dease to tell. There was no one within two hundred miles, no one except him and this woman. His fierce determination to have her overpowered all else.

"Joyce!" he cried, sweeping his arms about her. "Now you're mine! Now!"

Instantly a small, mittened fist struck the white patch from his chin where the skin had frozen and left a red smear across his face. Another fist dug into his stomach so wickedly he gasped for breath and loosened the grip of his arms.

"You beast!" cried Joyce as she sprang free. "You sent him up here to this. You would not help him, and now, when he may be dying just ahead, you stand here and say 'mine.'

"Yours! What is yours? You have nothing that's decent or honest. You have the soul of a snake, and the heart of one, and the ways of one. You have the body of a big, strong, brave man, and you have instincts that would shame a wolf.

"You call yourself a Hudson's Bay man, but there isn't a sleigh-dog at any post that isn't a better servant of the Company. You would wreck the Company to gain your own ends. You would sacrifice good men.

"Yours!" Joyce fairly screamed in the excess of her passion. "I'll show you if I'm yours! Take your dogs! Go back with them! I'll go and find him, and even failure and cold and hunger and the end will bring greater happiness than you could give me in a thousand years."

She turned abruptly and started off, walking rapidly down the wind toward the shore.

Wickson stared at her as he had stared at Phil two hours before. For a moment he was perplexed, mystified. Then came a quick flash of anger, anger that was directed at the back of the girl now half enveloped in the curtain of the storm.

"And she did that! To me!" he exclaimed fiercely.

He spoke to his dogs and started after

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Joyce in his long, easy, swift, swinging lope. As she heard his approach she whirled to face him.

"Get on the toboggan," he commanded gruffly as he stopped the team.

"I won't!"

He picked her up, carried her back and dropped her heavily on the top of the load.

"Hang on," he said as he turned away. "Boynton is just ahead somewhere. We've got to hurry."

He started forward on the run, veering in toward shore and calling to his dogs. In a moment the team was galloping to keep up with him.

Wickson's anger increased as he ran, and he was alert for the first sign of the team and its driver somewhere ahead of him in the storm. He had suddenly discovered that he must catch Phil, that he must find him before it was too late, that nothing else mattered.

It was not a sudden solicitude for Phil's safety that drove him on. Phil, as had always been the case with Wickson, was merely a means to an end, and now Wickson desired his safety, not for Phil's sake, but for his own.

"And she did it to me!" he repeated fiercely to himself again and again, and each time he ran faster.

For Wickson had been stung as he never had been before. Not by what Joyce had said to him, not by what Phil had threatened, but by his own treachery, by what he had done to himself. It was his pride that had been injured, and his anger was the greater because he himself had delivered the blow. At first that anger had been directed toward Joyce, but as his mind grasped all the facts she faded from his thoughts.

John Wickson had always been accustomed to winning. He never had known what failure might be. Success was a habit with him. In his own way he had been proud of this success, but as he ran on ahead of his dogs he saw that his pride was in himself, not in what he had accomplished. It was he, he alone with his power and his strength and his determination and his intellect that had carried him high in the North country. It was his greatest possession, this ability to win, not to win by any means, but to win solely through sheer strength of mind and of body.

Back there on the ice he had done something he had never done before, something he had never considered doing. He had abandoned his usual methods, he had mistrusted his own ability, he had descended to treachery to gain what he wanted. He was not afraid of Boynton, not afraid of his threat. He would delight in an equal combat. Yet he had taken the weakling's way, had dodged a fight, had shown disrespect for his own power. To win this woman he would have let Phil go on to perish instead of dragging him back and crushing him as he could.

The thought stung him on to a faster pace, to a greater desire to take him and Joyce back to Fort Dease, to reestablish the struggle on an even footing. Then, and he smiled grimly, he would win as he always had won, by the sheer strength of him.

Accordingly there was a certain exultation in his cry when he caught sight of a dim shadow ahead of him. In a moment he had dashed up to Phil's toboggan and stopped his team. With a jerk of his thumb over his shoulder, he sat down with his back to Joyce, staring ahead with a grim smile when he saw Phil dash past him, heard her low cry as she sprang to her feet.

OF WHAT happened in the next forty-eight hours none of the three was ever able to recall anything except isolated incidents. All that time they lay wrapped in their robes, buried in the snow. The storm roared over their heads, never relaxing its vigilance, never missing an opportunity to swoop down and enter the smallest opening.

Each nursed a piece of frozen meat close to the body. When the surface was thawed they nibbled. After each short sleep they wakened to find several mouthfuls ready.

None knew what the others did. For the first twenty-four hours they did not care. Joyce had been exhausted by four days of steady travel. Phil had hardly been in fit shape to leave Fort Dease. Wickson had traveled a thousand miles since February first. He had ridden much of the way, but the two days before he had reached Fort Dease he had traveled alone, and for three days and two nights he had not stopped even to make a fire. Hard, unbreakable man that he was, he had reached the point where rest was more than welcome.

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Trying as was the seige, each benefited by it. They were comparatively comfortable. Wickson had turned the toboggans on edge under a forming drift so that the storm defeated itself by continually adding to their covering. They derived nourishment from the meat, and they could sleep undisturbed.

The evening of the second day the storm blew out. The three emerged like polar bears, shaking off the snow. Wickson and Phil began at once to round up and harness the dogs. The toboggans were loaded, a comfortable place was made for Joyce on the larger one, and they were soon ready to start.

Little was said during the preparations. Phil, in answer to Joyce's questions, had outlined the story of his capture and explained the mystery of Solomon Moses. She told how she had lost her team in the morning and had abandoned the toboggan because she could not drag it.

Phil asked the superintendent how he happened to arrive on the scene when he did.

"I got back to Savant House three weeks after Miss Plummer left," Wickson answered simply. "I started after her at once. It was no trip for a woman. About fifty miles from Dease I met her Indians. Said they were afraid of a weeteego. Mine wouldn't go on, so I came alone. Found her note and saw where you had filed off the chains and knew you had got loose. I started less than ten hours after you did."

There was now no danger. By traveling all night and most of the next day they would reach Penitentiary Post, where they would have good food, shelter, a chance to rest. What would come afterward, they did not even plan. Each was still suffering from the lassitude which follows bodily exhaustion.

They traveled all night. At dawn they halted and built a fire. Stimulated by the hot, black tea, they decided to go on until they reached the fort. They were tired, but they would rather rest in bed than on the ice, would rather sit down to a table of steaming dishes than continue to gnaw frozen food.

They went on all day. Every hour Wickson and Phil changed places, one riding, the other going ahead, while occasionally Joyce ran beside the dogs to drive the numbness from her feet and the ache of the cold from between her shoulders.

When darkness came there was no sign of the fort. It meant two more hours at least, possibly three, with the dogs showing signs of the strain. But always there was the thought of warm beds, endless sleep, scalding tea, fried pork, sugar, hot bannock, possibly a tin of jam.

In those last hours it is doubtful if any of the three considered the real relationship that existed between them. Hatred and jealousy and fear and contempt, plans for the future, none of these could persist in the face of their purely physical desires.

Phil was in the lead when they reached the mouth of Cut-Bank River.

"We're there!" he called back to the others as he turned up the shore.

In a moment the snow forced a halt and he returned to the rear toboggan for his snow-shoes. Wickson already had his on and had started forward.

"What's that smell?" he demanded suddenly, as he stopped and sniffed.

Phil looked up, inhaled the air.

"Some one's there!" he cried. "They've started a fire in the dwelling-house."

He sprang after Wickson and the dogs toiled behind him in the deep snow of the slope.

"How far back is the fort?" asked Wickson, who was breaking out the fresh trail.

"Right at the top of the bank here," answered Phil as he peered past the superintendent into the darkness.

He stopped, stared for a moment and then sprang on.

"Hurry up!" he called at Wickson's back. "There's been a fire! The dwelling-house is gone!"

They had reached the top of the low bank and Wickson stopped at the corner of the picket fence. Phil plowed up to his side. Before them was a white expanse broken only by the four sides of the inclosure. Dwelling-house, trading-shop, warehouse, servants' house, Indian house, all were gone. Even the cache which Phil and Sandy had made was leveled.

CHAPTER XIV

PHIL'S PLANS AND WICKSON

STANDING side by side, the two men looked across the spot where Fort Dease had been. The space within the inclosure was perfectly level. The blanket of

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snow lay unwrinkled. The site of Penitentiary Post was as empty and as barren as the surrounding waste.

Because of their intimate knowledge of the Northland, Phil Boynton and John Wickson understood at once and perfectly the peril they faced, grasped instantly every detail of their problem. Neither minimized in his own mind the danger of the situation, and yet neither spoke of it.

The North is a land of the unexpected, of the uncertain, and those who are of it know the infinite possibilities it holds for irregularity and variety. They come in time to treat the unusual as the usual, the extraordinary as the commonplace, and to them there is nothing surprising, nothing disconcerting, nothing that completely dismays. Obstacles are inevitable. Their size and peculiarities only cause comment.

And so it was that Wickson said:

"Well, the woodpile wasn't burned. We can have a warm camp tonight."

"Which we're tired enough to care more about than anything else," added Phil as they turned back to bring up the dogs.

Half-way they met Joyce floundering toward them through the deep snow.

"What has happened?" she asked anxiously.

"The fort's burned, every building of it," Phil answered.

"The fort burned! Why, that means that we have no food, no——"

She stopped, unable to go on and express in words what the situation would mean to them.

"Oh, we'll get out somehow. We'll have a good camp tonight. That's all that any one cares about now. And when we are rested we'll make plans."

"It will be hardest on the dogs," added Wickson. "They'll miss a meal or two."

There was no intention on the part of the men to deceive Joyce as to the true situation. She did not have the physical strength nor the skill of a man, but she had shown herself equal in spirit in the face of a much more perilous emergency, and they accorded this spirit its just respect.

It was this one thing, however, that dismayed Phil. Joyce was brave enough, but that very bravery and desire to do her share would only add to her torture. She would tax her strength too often. She would be forced to go on when her body was racked by every step. She would be cold and for days and days she would be hungry, starving at the end. And always there would be the possibility that her soft, round, pink body would become "hard and cold and white like the pieces of ice that stick up on the shore of the salt water."

Phil's concern for Joyce served only to strengthen his determination that they must get out, and as he drove his team into the inclosure his mind was busy with the problem.

First, they would have food for no more than two days when they would be ready to leave the site of Fort Dease. Fort Berens was more than a week's journey to the northwest along the coast, a fuelless, hazardous trail. Two hundred miles to the west was the nearest outpost of the Company. But only an Indian could find it.

They were bound on one side by the bay and on the other by a wide strip of treeless, storm-swept, lifeless country. No food, no shelter, no fuel, no possibility of gaining any one of these—that was the situation.

In a surprisingly short time Wickson and Phil had taken care of the dogs and built a fire in the shelter of the big pile of wood. They started snow to melting for tea, cut some bacon and mixed a bannock. Little was said as they worked. All three were very tired, and because of their weariness they shivered even when close to the big fire.

The tea and the hot food accomplished wonders in reviving their spirits, however, and after the meal they became even cheerful. Enjoyment is largely a matter of contrast, and after the long, cold, weary days and nights on the shore ice, the shelter of the woodpile, the full stomachs and the roaring blaze brought a certain amount of contentment. For the first time the destruction of the fort was mentioned.

"There wasn't a fire in the place when I got here just before dark that night," Wickson said, "and I didn't stop to build one. After I read that note I started at once."

"Of course not," said Phil. "All the buildings wouldn't catch from one fire. There is only one answer to this. Solomon Moses got back to his camp down the shore, found I had escaped and started after me. His life-work has been to starve a Hudson's Bay Company man because he believes the Company let his family starve two years ago. He knew that if he burned the post I couldn't get anything to eat and that I couldn't get out without food."

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"But the thing's done," was the superintendent's only comment, "and all we have to consider is getting out. That and getting supplies in here by Summer so we can take care of the hunters."

"There won't be any hunters," Phil retorted. "That is, unless Solomon Moses is captured and the Indians rounded up before Spring."

"But you can't do anything like that without food. We haven't enough to take us anywhere. Our best plan is to start for the nearest outpost to the west and travel the last of the way on nothing."

"And if we are lost or delayed by a storm what will we live on?" asked Phil.

"That's a chance we've got to take," answered Wickson soberly.

"And in the meantime we leave Solomon Moses free to do what he wants to do. And when Spring comes the Free-trader will have the hunters."

"You aren't suggesting that we eat what little food we have while we try to capture Solomon Moses?" asked Wickson. "Isn't it better to go out first, get food and return?"

"It is if we were sure of getting out. But look here. You're a good man, Wickson. They say you can do most things that an Indian can do. But I don't think you can get across to the nearest outpost. I don't think you can find your way after that storm. And we've got to be sure when we start on our slim rations.

"Here's what I suggest. Solomon Moses left me at his camp down the shore to go after more meat. He probably brought in at least a hundred pounds. It started to snow right after he burned the post. He most likely went to that camp. We can go down there, surprise him, give him a running start and then follow his trail to the timber country. We can use what meat he leaves at the camp until we get to the timber. There we will have a chance at some caribou or find some hunter's teepee, and Solomon will supply the guide we need."

"And if anything happens to lose us our guide before we get to the timber, or if we get there and can't get food?" asked Wickson quietly.

"It's a chance we've got to take. At least we don't take so big a chance that way as to start to the nearest outpost without any guide and on short rations."

It was a plan which required daring and courage. Neither of the men lacked either. And Wickson had chafed inwardly at the necessity of leaving Fort Dease without doing anything to save the fur business for the Company. In either program they faced death by starvation. But in Phil's plan there was the possibility of definite accomplishment. If successful, the reward of their toil, their privations, would be not only the saving of their own lives but the achievement of that which the Company had a right to expect of them.

Both men were silent for a moment. Then they looked up. The fire of courageous purpose leaped into their eyes simultaneously. Joyce, watching, was thrilled and glad at the same time. But when they spoke it was quietly, simply as though over the decision of an ordinary day's work.

"You're right, Boynton. Your plan is best. How much food have we."

"Enough for two days."

Wickson arose.

"I'm going to take a look around," he said as he walked out past the fire. "There may be something left, something we can use for dog food at least. We haven't a thing for them, and we can't go far without the dogs."

"Better wait until daylight," Phil suggested. "We won't be getting out of here tomorrow because we won't be fit to start."

"I want to know what we have to bank on before I go to sleep," was the answer, and Wickson walked off into the darkness.

AS SOON as they were alone Joyce leaned over and placed a hand on Phil's arm.

"I'm afraid," she whispered. "Must we stay with him? Isn't there some way to have Wickson go one way and we another?"

"Not with two days' food," laughed Phil. "But there is nothing to be afraid of. We're in the same boat and we've got to stick together. Afterward we'll have something to settle. But we're neither of us fools enough to try to settle it here with this job before us."

"But he will, Phil," insisted Joyce. "That is just what I am afraid of. Things like this don't frighten him. Out there on the ice that day he found me, in the face of everything, he made love to me. Said that I was his, that he had found me. He won't stop at anything. Phil, I feel sure that he didn't intend to tell me that you were near

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us, that he intended to let you go on in the storm looking for me."

"Wickson wouldn't do a thing like that. He's a hard man, but he wouldn't fight that way. This is the kind of a fight that you can't understand. He understands and I understand. And I know that I can trust him to fight fair."

"But you only look at it from a man's standpoint, and as a man sees such things. A woman feels them, Phil, and I have felt all along that we can't trust him. He didn't play fair when he sent you to Penitentiary Post, and he didn't play fair when he refused to send help after he heard that you were there alone.

"No, Phil, the man is a savage. He wants me and he will do anything to get me, and I'm afraid."

Phil did not answer. Something in Joyce's tone had caused a sense of uneasiness which her words had failed to inspire. He realized suddenly that the situation did permit Wickson to practise any deviltry he might devise. He knew the superintendent had already jeopardized the Company's interests to gain his own ends, while Joyce's theory that Wickson would have let him go on alone after he had found her, was entirely tenable in the light of other events.

"Well," he said at length, "whether you're right or not, the three of us have got to stick together, and the best thing we can do is to be on our guard."

"Oh, Boynton!" came a strangely muffled voice from out in the darkness.

Phil jumped to his feet, but Joyce held him back.

"Don't go!" she implored. "It's a trap. Didn't you hear how strange his voice sounded? He's hiding and is going to kill you, Phil. Don't go."

"Such a thing couldn't happen," he replied as he tried to release himself.

"Anything can happen in such a place and with such a man," she declared fiercely. "Ask him what he wants."

"What's the matter?" Phil called.

"Come here, Boynton. Give me a hand."

"Something is the matter," and Phil pulled away and ran off in the darkness.

"Where are you?" he called when he reached the site of the dwelling-house.

"Down here," came a voice from his feet, and he peered into what had been the cellar beneath the kitchen.

"What's happened?"

"I went through the floor and broke my leg or turned my ankle, or something. Give me your hand and I can get out."

Phil reached down, braced himself, gripped the fingers that touched his and heaved with all his strength.

"Lord, that hurts!" came from Wickson's clenched teeth as he rolled out into the snow.

He lay still for a moment and Phil bent over him anxiously.

"Maybe it's only a strain," he said encouragingly. "You can't have anything like that now, man!"

"I've got it," was the vicious retort. "Give me a hand over to the fire."

Phil helped the superintendent to his feet and then supported him across to the camp.

"What is it?" cried Joyce when they entered the circle of light.

"Just another little setback," said Phil as he eased Wickson to a seat on a blanket before the fire.

He began at once to undo the moccasin lashings on the injured foot and soon had the duffles and stocking off.

"That's it," said Wickson as he bent forward to look, the perspiration dripping from his forehead. "I lit on that foot and turned the ankle, turned it bad. I won't be able to put it to the ground for ten days or two weeks."

He glanced up to see the consternation in the faces of his companions.

"Oh, don't let it bother you," he said gruffly. "Go on. Get out as best you can. I'll stay here and take my chances."

CHAPTER XV

THE WHITE DESERT

"TAKE your chances!" Phil snorted. "What chances have you? We might as well shoot you as leave you this way."

"But you can't help any by staying, not if there were a dozen of you."

"We're not going to stay. We've got two dog teams and one of them can haul you."

"Don't be a fool, Boynton. A dog team is no good when you haven't anything to feed it. I tell you, your own chances are slim enough and I won't be a burden to any one. Besides, there is the Company to consider. Those Indians must be rounded up, supplies must be got in and this crazy

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Indian put out of the way. We can't lose a post like this."

Phil's face flushed with anger when Wickson mentioned the Company, and when he attempted to speak he only spluttered. Then, before the words could come, he turned away and began to throw wood upon the blaze with reckless hands.

"The first thing to do is to get that ankle fixed up," he said when the fire was roaring to suit him. "Is there anything on your toboggan we can use for a bandage?"

"There's a spare shirt. We can't do anything but bind it up tight."

Phil found the shirt and cut the back into long strips. With Joyce's help he bound the injured joint firmly and evenly and then replaced the duffles and moccasin.

"Now you must keep it quiet," Phil said as he began to arrange Wickson's bed beside the fire. "We won't start tomorrow because we need a day to rest and get ready. That will give you two nights and a day when you won't have to move, and we can keep hot cloths on it tomorrow. We're too tired to do it tonight."

Phil arranged Joyce's bed at Wickson's head and his own at the superintendent's feet so that they flanked the fire on three sides. Each had a rabbit-skin robe sewed to half of a four-point blanket, a covering that would keep them warm even without a fire, and ten minutes after Wickson's ankle had been bandaged Joyce and Phil were asleep. It wasn't long afterward before the superintendent's weariness became greater than the pain and he, too, had dropped off.

It was mid-forenoon before Phil wakened and built a fire. The others did not move until tea had been boiled. The sun was shining, the entire world about them white and clean and fresh, but the camp beside the woodpile was a cheerless place and all three had wakened to a complete realization of what they faced.

"We'll see how much food there is before we cook breakfast," Phil said as he began to take things from the grub-box on Wickson's toboggan.

The others watched him expectantly, though each knew how insignificant the supplies were. When it was all spread before the fire they looked at each other questioningly.

"We're hungry enough to eat all that today," Phil finally said.

"Three days is as long as we can make it last. But it will take us to Solomon Moses's shore camp, and I'm banking on meat there."

"But the dogs?" asked Joyce.

"I fed them the last before we started from up the shore," answered Wickson. "Didn't you have fish stored here, Boynton?"

"Solomon wouldn't have left any of that. I'll get some breakfast and then look around. There may be something that the fire didn't touch."

After the meal Phil made a careful search of the entire place. In the cellar of the dwelling-house he found a charred piece of bacon, ten pounds in all. In the ruins of the warehouse he found a pile of burned fish. He dug into it with an ax and discovered less than twenty pounds in the center that had not been touched by the fire. Around this was enough half-baked food to last the dogs four days, while the half-dozen unscorched fish would do for themselves.

When Phil had gathered in a sack all the dog food he could he turned the two teams loose and let them make a meal of the charred crums. The hungry animals licked up all that remained.

Little was said about the camp-fire that afternoon. There was no mid-day meal and Phil and Joyce lay on their robes and dozed, while Wickson sat with his back against the woodpile and his injured ankle near the blaze. At sunset Phil sat up and looked at the sky.

"We've had enough rest," he said suddenly, "and night is as good as day for traveling on the shore ice. We'll start now."

He sliced some of the burned bacon and gave it to Joyce to fry and then began to arrange the loads on the two toboggans. By dark the teams were hitched up, Wickson was seated on the larger toboggan with his back against the robes and grub box, and they were ready to start. Down on the shore Phil tied the leader of the second team to the tail of the first toboggan, Joyce took her seat at the rear, and they were off.

Except for brief stops every two hours to give Phil a chance to regain his breath, they traveled at a trot all night. Before the first sign of dawn they drew in close to shore, where the wind had banked up a drift against projecting pieces of shore ice, and halted.

"We'll stay here until daylight so we can

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see what we're doing," said Phil as he sat down beside Joyce on her toboggan.

"Look here, Boynton," suddenly exclaimed Wickson. "I've been thinking this thing over. Now's the time to get this Indian. We can't let him escape. You leave us and go ahead. Sneak up to his camp with my rifle. Make a noise and when he looks out, shoot him. We've got a chance to get him now and we can't be sure of having it again."

Phil did not answer and Wickson exclaimed angrily:

"Why, there is no other way to look at it. This man has ruined the business of the post. You say yourself that if he continues to haunt this place not a hunter will stay with the Company. I know it looks as though I'm putting it up to you. But you're the only one who is physically able to do it."

"There is not a chance in the world of my being able to get him," retorted Phil. "That Indian is only crazy on one subject. He is probably expecting just that thing, and waiting for it with his trade gun. And even if I thought that I could do it, I wouldn't."

Wickson, as is the case with big, active men who are unable to do what they see must be done, had grown irritable. At Phil's refusal to consider such a plan of procedure he turned upon him savagely:

"Think, man, the chance that you have! You may hunt for days, weeks or months before you find him again. Think what you owe the Company! God, but I wish I had two legs. Solomon Moses would never leave that camp!"

"Wickson," interrupted Phil quietly. "You might have a dozen legs and you'd never kill that Indian while I was here to prevent it, as long as we need him for a guide to the timber country."

"Why don't you tell the truth?" taunted Wickson. "Why don't you admit that you are afraid? It's a good thing for the old H. B. C., Boynton, that it has few men like you in its service or it would be a laughing-stock instead of the mighty thing it is. At least for the sake of the men who have done things in the past, you might take this little chance."

At the first word Phil had jumped to his feet and run across to the injured man's toboggan.

"That's enough, Wickson," he said. "I'm running this thing and I'll run it as I see fit. I'm not afraid for myself. And I don't care particularly what happens to you. But there's a woman here. I'm responsible for her. And she's going to get out. I'm neither going to risk having that Indian get me with his trade gun nor am I going to spoil our chance of getting a guide out of this country.

"Can't you see what that would mean, Wickson? Isn't it bad enough for her to be out here now, where only men should be, without running the risk that worse things should happen? Aren't you satisfied with being responsible for the fact that she is here without wanting to place her in greater danger?

"Or can you see that with your single idea? I tell you that there are other things in this world besides the Hudson's Bay Company and a man's loyalty to it. Thank God, I can keep my balance."

Phil stopped speaking and stood waiting, eager for a reply, poised to deliver a fresh denunciation. But Wickson had nothing to say. From what Phil could see of him in the darkness he did not seem even to have heard. He was gazing at the black wall of night out on the ice. At last a sound came from his lips, a mocking, mirthless chuckle.

Had Phil been able to see the man's face he would have paused. He would have known that the laugh was not for him, that he even had been forgotten. But he could not see and he burst forth angrily:

"I don't want to hear talk of loyalty from you, Wickson. I'll never learn it from a man who had put himself ahead of the Company as you have done. You are responsible for the loss of Fort Dease, for everything that had happened here. You did it all because——"

"That's enough," snapped Wickson. "You've said all that. Go ahead and run this thing as you want to."

Phil, more angry than ever, was about to speak again when he heard Joyce call his name softly and he turned and went back to her.

"Don't," she whispered. "It doesn't do any good, and it only takes your strength to become so angry. He's not worth it, Phil."

"But——"

"Yes, I heard all he said, and if it is the thing to do, the thing to do for the Company, I wish you would"

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"You're a better man than he is," he whispered as he drew her to him.

"But," she protested, "I wish you wouldn't stay back on my account."

"It isn't on your account. Now that John Wickson sees what his treachery has cost the Company he can think only of saving it. But we are going to get out and we are going to save Fort Dease. I can think of both. And I am not going to let the work of one spoil the chance of doing the other. I didn't tell him so. I couldn't, I was so mad. I don't want to capture Solomon Moses now. I want him to see us in plenty of time so that he can start off for the timber. It's our only chance to get out. Everything depends on it. After that we can save Fort Dease and put Solomon out of the way."

"But Phil! You're not going to kill him on sight?"

"I don't see what else there is to do."

"But that's a monstrous thing. You haven't the right to take a human life that way, even if the man is insane."

Phil shrugged his shoulders.

"There are some things you have to do in this country."

"But you can't! It's a terrible thing! It's not right! It's not just! You must promise that you'll try first to capture him, to take him prisoner and turn him over to the proper authorities. If he's insane he is not at fault."

"What would I do with him if I did capture him alive? He would be a constant source of danger to you and a burden that might prevent our getting out."

"No, you must promise you won't."

It was the first time Phil had ever been asked for a promise and it was the first thing Joyce had ever asked of him.

"All right," he said after a moment. "I'll try."

DAWN came a half-hour later and they started along the shore. Phil had no way of knowing how close he might be to the island of spruce in which the Indian had his camp but he had not gone more than a mile before it appeared ahead of him. He hurried on until he struck a fresh snow-shoe trail leading away from the shore.

"It's just a mile from here," he said when he stopped the dogs and went back to the first toboggan for his snow-shoes. "Joyce, you go ahead of this team. Here are Wickson's snow-shoes. Don't keep too close when we are near the camp. I'll go ahead."

He called loudly to the dogs to follow him and plunged up the bank, Wickson's rifle in his hands. Half way to the island of spruce he called sharply to his dogs and a little later turned and struck at one with his fist. The poor brute, which had been toiling patiently, yelped in fright and astonishment as it sprang to one side while the wheel dog, which protested whenever any member of the team was punished, sat back on his haunches and howled.

"That will give him a start, unless he's on one of his meat drunks," Phil thought as he went on again.

Two hundred yards from the edge of the timber he halted again.

"I'm not going to take the chance that he is lying in the brush with a gun," he called back to Joyce. "I'm going to make a circle and see if he has gone."

He swung out to the left until he was able to see the bare, white waste on the other side of the spruce. Then, when he stopped to watch he caught a black dot on the drifts far ahead of him and speeding in the opposite direction.

"He's gone!" he called to the others. "He's started back for the timber country. Now we've got a trail that will take us out."

Eagerly they pushed ahead and in five minutes the teams were halted beside the teepee in which Phil had been held prisoner. Phil dove inside at once and began to paw over the pile of furs in the rear. Wickson sitting on his toboggan, Joyce watching the dogs, they heard him call. The next moment he came out dragging a hind quarter of caribou.

"We won't starve yet!" he exclaimed. "And we'll have some right now. There's a fire still going inside and it won't take long to fry a few steaks."

"You're going right on, aren't you?" asked Wickson.

"Of course. We've got to let him know we're after him. Otherwise he might double back."

All morning the fleeing black dot on the great snow plain was in sight. The crust was hard and firm, having been packed by the wind and stiffened by the intense cold, and with his long, narrow, turned-up snow-shoes Phil was able to maintain a good pace, while the dogs, with their comparatively light loads, followed easily.

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Contrary to Phil's expectation, Solomon's snow-shoes did not leave a well-marked trail. The crust was too hard, and it was only in little patches of snow that had lodged in the depressions that the path of the fleeing Indian could be seen.

When the sun was up the wind began to blow and soon even the few snow-shoe impressions began to fade. Phil looked ahead anxiously. Solomon had reached the black line which marked the beginning of the stunted spruce, the tops of which barely showed above the surface of the snow. Against such a background, and at that distance, he could no longer be seen.

Phil glanced back and saw that the spruce island near the bay was still visible. It was his last landmark. If he went on, if the sky became clouded, he would be completely lost before night. If the wind continued to wipe out the faint imprints of Solomon's snow-shoes there would be nothing to guide him.

He stopped the dogs as if for one of his usual breathing spells but he did not go back to sit down on Joyce's toboggan. Instead, he kept looking ahead, weighing the chances, trying to reach a decision. If he pressed on and lost the trail it would be certain death for all three. He could never hope to cross the barren waste unguided. Even if he did cross it, he would be little better off.

To turn back offered no better alternative. He could only return to Solomon's camp, or the site of Fort Dease, and start out anew but with no better chance of reaching any place and with less food. As Phil realized this he looked across the desolate waste before him and shivered. To go back meant to delay the end. To go on brought it nearer. He could picture them wandering out there on the white plain until starved and frozen. He didn't care for himself, and he did not think of Wickson, but the thought of the torture in store for Joyce was more than he could bear.

He hesitated; turned back. As he was about to swing out and wheel the team he glanced again toward the place where he had last seen the Indian. Beyond the black line of the first stunted bushes, in a clear space no larger than his hand, it seemed, there appeared for an instant a crawling speck against the white snow.

"I'm a fool," he muttered as he started forward again. "It's the only chance. Come on, puppies."

CHAPTER XVI

SOLOMON'S TRAIL

A LITTLE after noon Phil reached the first of the dwarfed growth that showed above the surface of the snow. For more than an hour there had not been a trace of Solomon Moses and he had been guided entirely by the little patch of white he had seen beyond the black line.

Once in the brush, however, Phil struck something that was both a difficulty and an incalculable benefit. Sheltered by the spruce, the snow had not been packed so firmly by the wind. The surface became softer and soon Phil was walking in six inches of it. Sometimes drifts two feet deep were piled up. Since the last storm there had been no severe winds accompanied by low temperatures to pack and stiffen the snow, and the last fall still lay loosely on top.

Eagerly Phil pressed on toward the opening which he had seen the Indian cross. There he would find the trail if he was ever to find it, and from there he must continue with as few rests as possible until he reached the permanent camp of Solomon Moses in his old hunting-ground.

The Indian's trail was there and Phil swung into it with a fresh burst of speed. Though he had traveled all night and all day, he kept on with only short rests until darkness finally compelled a halt.

Joyce, who had been riding almost continuously, did most of the work of making camp. Phil did not realize his great weariness until he had stopped and begun to chill. He unharnessed the dogs while Joyce dug a great hole in the snow and gathered brush for a fire. When everything was done except the cooking she insisted on Phil sitting down while she attended to that, and the next morning she was up and had breakfast ready before he wakened.

As she worked there beside the fire in the darkness she was conscious of being watched and glanced up to see Wickson looking at her.

"Good morning," she whispered. "Your ankle better?"

"Yes, thanks, but still useless."

Joyce touched her lips with a finger and motioned toward Phil.

"I know," Wickson whispered. "He needs the sleep. It was a great day's work

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he did yesterday. I didn't think he could last it through."

Joyce turned to her boiling tea and simmering meat with a sudden, inexplicable feeling of friendliness toward the injured man. At first she believed it was because they were equal partners in the face of a great danger. But they had been before. As she puzzled over the situation, pretending to be busy with the kettle of meat, she realized that it was a change in Wickson himself. For the first time he had looked at her without that disturbing light in his eyes. For the first time since that dinner in Savant House she did not feel uncomfortable in his presence.

Wondering, she glanced at him again, but this time he was not watching her.

"Tell me, honestly," she said, "what our chances are. Is there anything I can do to help?"

"Our chances are good, if Boynton can stand the pace," Wickson replied at once. "He did the only thing we could do, and you can help by going ahead once in a while and giving him a ride. That's the only thing I'm afraid of, his playing out. He didn't start in good shape, but he's young and a man can stand a lot of punishment when he has to."

Phil did ride for an hour altogether that day, while Joyce, with Wickson's snowshoes, went ahead of the dogs. Solomon Moses's trail was unmistakable but it had one disconcerting feature. When they camped that second night they had not found a place where the Indian had stopped to sleep. He had gone on without a rest for a day and a night, and as he traveled quite as fast as they he must be a day ahead of them, perhaps thirty or more miles.

Wickson, who had watched every foot of the trail from his seat on the toboggan, commented on this fact that night, and Phil looked anxiously at the sky, as he had done often in the afternoon.

"I know it," he said, "and the only thing we can hope for is that it doesn't snow until we reach the spruce. Once in the timber we can find his trail, even if there is a foot of snow on it."

"And out here?" asked Joyce.

"It would be hopeless in an hour or two, less if there should be a wind with the snow."

It did not snow that night nor the next day, though the clouds still hung low. In the middle of the forenoon Joyce was leading while Phil took a breathing spell on the toboggan. For a mile the trail led through thick brush, much of which was taller and more sturdy than that through which they had been traveling.

"Boynton! Your rifle! Quick!" cried Wickson.

"What is it?" asked Phil as he floundered ahead through the drifts without his snowshoes.

Joyce, at Wickson's call, had drawn back in sudden fear and was looking uncertainly about her.

"There's a camp ahead," whispered Wickson as Phil passed him. "Be careful. He may be there."

"Come back, Joyce," commanded Phil as he started ahead. "Get behind Wickson and keep low."

He slipped into the brush at one side of the trail and began to work forward. At last, by bending down, he could see a skin teepee just ahead.

His rifle ready, he moved nearer, stopping every few feet to look around and to listen. But there was no sound and no movement and he reached the camp without seeing any indication of the Indian's presence.

He was at the rear, but from his final position he could see the snow-shoe trail leading up from the direction in which he had come, while on the other side the webbed impressions went on toward the west. Solomon had come and gone.

Still moving cautiously and ready with his rifle, Phil went around to the front of the teepee and looked in. It was empty.

"Bring up the dogs," he called. "He has gone."

He threw back the flap over the door and entered. The ashes in the center were still warm and one coal showed when he blew upon them.

"What is it?" called Joyce from outside.

"Wait a minute," Phil answered as he began a search.

The teepee was much smaller than that in which he had been held prisoner. Placed near the door where they could be seen at once were two bones freshly stripped. But nowhere was there any caribou. He picked up the bones, crawled out through the low door and stood up.

"Any meat?" asked Wickson.

"Only these," Phil answered holding up the bones. "Left to remind us that he has

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meat and we haven't much. But they may be welcome in soup later. Solomon stopped long enough to have a good meal."

"Then we have lost him!" cried Joyce. "If this is his camp we'll never find him."

"This is only a relay camp," Phil exclaimed. "I might have known he would have something like this between the timber and his shore camp. This is where he came for meat when he had me tied in the teepee."

"Let's get along, then," interrupted Wickson. "It hasn't helped any to find it."

"It did help," Phil replied. "It delayed Solomon and he is no more than six hours ahead of us now. There was a coal or two still left in the ashes, and the coals from this small spruce don't last long. He probably started from here at daylight this morning."

Wickson looked at the low clouds and noted the direction of the wind.

"That gain may help, but I doubt it," he said. "We're not more than half-way, if his hunting district is somewhere near Berens River, and if it snows and blows before we get into the thick spruce we'll never track him."

Phil knew as well as the superintendent what a snow-storm would do to them. With the first flake the gain of a day and a half over the Indian would be valueless. Without his track to guide them there was no possibility of their ever reaching a place where they could obtain food. It meant the end.

THEY started at once, Phil in the lead and shoving his snow-shoes ahead savagely. Tired as he was, already beginning to feel the results of half rations, the dread of the coming snow aroused anger rather than fear. He glared at the clouds and dared them to open their heavy bins, and all the time he kept increasing his pace, scorning the usual stops for rests, driving himself on through the remainder of the day. At last darkness and weariness combined to send him stumbling along the sides of the trail and he called a halt.

Phil went to sleep while Joyce cooked supper. She gathered the wood, dug out a hole for the beds, assisted Wickson to a place beside the fire, melted snow for the tea and set meat to simmering in a kettle. The brush burned quickly and she spent much time gathering enough to do what little cooking there was to be done.

All the time Wickson watched her closely and Joyce knew that he did. But as in the morning she felt something different in his scrutiny. Once she stole a glance at him when her face was in the shadow and saw that, while his eyes were upon her, his thoughts were not. He seemed to be planning, scheming, turning something over and over in his mind, and the tense stare and furrowed brow, the forceful attitude and the lack of uncertainty in his expression, dismayed Joyce more than anything she had ever known about him before.

Her old fears and disquietude returned. As she had always believed, the man was ruthless. He sat there planning to resume the battle the minute the three were safe again. While others toiled and fought for him he devised fresh means of ruining the happiness which she and Phil deserved.

Joyce was not the sort of woman who would have feared Wickson or any other man under normal circumstances. She was intelligent enough to know that any one would be powerless to accomplish such a thing. But up there in the north country everything was different. This man was like the land in which he lived. He was as cruel as the cold, as ruthless as a blizzard, as unswerving and as insatiable as the snarling water of the great rivers. Mercy was absent in him as in the land itself.

And it was toward this that they were struggling. She and Phil together were taking this man to a place of safety that again he might attempt to wreck their happiness. Angrily she poked at the meat in the kettle with a stick. Was it worth it? Would it not be better to die out there on the great white desert where they could be together, where they could be sure of each other, than to struggle on that this man might win in the end?

She did not know what he might do. Her reason told her that in reality he could accomplish nothing against her love for Phil. And yet all she had seen of the man, all she had heard of him, all the things she had felt of him, served to oppress with a certainty that his will would prevail. There was no law, no convention, no power of any sort, to which he need give heed. Like the North itself, he would conquer in the end.

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And then, swinging down slowly, lazily, turning to dart upward and melt in the warm air above the fire, came the first flakes of the storm. Joyce, her former fears instantly forgotten in the face of this immediate terror, turned pleadingly to the man she had just declared to be without mercy.

"Is it the end?" her eyes asked plainly.

Wickson nodded but did not speak. His eyes shone with fury. Silently he shook his fist at the sky. Crippled, helpless, he sat there defying the North to do its worst. There was no fear, no supplication, in his attitude, and as she looked Joyce found herself admiring the courage of the man while she dreaded his power.

The snow-flakes, falling thickly now, struck Phil's face and wakened him. He sat up slowly, still dazed, and then the significance of the storm reached him. He glanced quickly at the others and then spread his hand before the little blaze.

No one spoke. Joyce forgot the meat simmering in the kettle. Phil continued to stare into the fire and Wickson at the snow as it dropped into the zone of firelight. There was no bluster, no noise, no furor about the storm. A Summer evening could not have been more peaceful, and yet each softly fluttering flake spelled the end for those three out there in the middle of that trackless, treeless waste.

At last Joyce lifted the kettle from the fire and they began to eat supper. It was the first meal since morning and they were very hungry. But even the food, welcome as it was, failed to rouse them from their despondency, and as soon as the last shred of meat was gone and the last drop of broth was drained, each turned to his robes and spread them beside the dying fire.

But, tired as they were, none of them slept for a time. The fire quickly died down and left the camp in darkness. At first there were spots where each lay, where the fire had been built, where the toboggans had been turned on edge beside them. But gradually the black shapes become dim and in half an hour everything lay white except a small place where a few lingering coals still spluttered as the snow struck them.

The dogs, tied to the dwarfed growth about the camp, had been restless at the beginning of the storm but gradually they dug nests in the drifts and went to sleep. The spot was as quiet as any other on that vast lifeless plain.

Out of that tomb-like silence there burst upon the three people in the camp the first notes of a demoniacal shriek that rose and fell with a mocking cadence. It ended in a wild burst of laughter and a gleeful chuckle that brought a chill even to Wickson's heart as he threw back his robe and sat up.

CHAPTER XVII

WICKSON TELLS OF HIS LOVE

"THAT'S not a wolf," whispered Wickson. "What is it? Even the dogs are scared. They never answered."

"It's the weeteego," answered Joyce, her voice trembling and hoarse.

"Take the rifle and get after him, Boynton," commanded the superintendent. "He isn't far."

"I will not!" retorted Phil exultantly. "That yelling nearly drove me crazy last month, but I never heard a sweeter sound than it was just now."

"Sweeter!" exclaimed Wickson angrily. "He'll come in here and murder us before we can make a move."

Phil's elation vanished, but not because of what Wickson had said.

"I'm afraid it won't help," he said, "though there is no danger. You don't understand Solomon Moses. I told you his life work is to starve a Hudson's Bay Company man. He is going to stick around here and chuckle because he thinks we're finished now for good. You should have seen the joy in his face when he told me how he would watch me die. He can't resist coming to mock us."

"But if he stays until the storm is over we can track him!" cried Joyce.

"That's what I first thought of but he's too clever for that. He's banking on a long storm, two days probably, with a wind at the end of it. He'll stay out there and laugh at us until midnight. Then he'll slip off and by daylight there won't be a sign of his tracks."

Again the howl burst upon them, ending as before in a wild chuckle of delight.

"The thing to do is to keep watch and start as soon as he does," declared Wickson. "It's our only chance."

"And Solomon will see that we don't get it," retorted Phil. "You know there is no

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chance whatever of finding him out in that," and he swung his arm at the brush and the darkness and the thickly falling snow.

Tired as they were, there was no sleep for any of them so long as Solomon Moses howled. Sometimes he came so close to camp all three started as if he were upon them. Sometimes he sounded as if he were far away. He howled to the right and the left, to the front and the rear. He retreated and advanced, and once after he had been barely heard there was a long silence.

"He's gone!" exclaimed Phil. "That ends us."

He turned to his robe, shook off the snow and prepared to go to sleep. Joyce followed but Wickson, under the spell of the demoniacal shrieks for the first time, remained sitting on his robe.

At last, just as Phil had dropped off to sleep, the howl came from close by. Phil and Joyce sat up again, expectant, encouraged.

For a long time they sat there. Every few minutes Solomon shrieked his joy at them until to Wickson, at least, it became maddening. Phil only laughed.

"I hope he forgets himself," he said, "and waits until daylight. If he only would, we'd have a chance."

Joyce arranged her robe about her shoulders and shivered.

"It's getting cold," she said, and her teeth chattered. "It was warm when the storm began."

Phil glanced up at the sky, saw that the flakes of snow were smaller and less in number. Suddenly he sprang to his feet. As he did so Solomon howled again, close by this time. But the startling thing was the new note, a note of terror, that dominated the shriek. It was terror and dismay and defeat, all told in a wild, wailing cry. The noise of crashing brush came to those in the camp and then all was still.

"What is it?" whispered Joyce.

"See!" cried Phil, pointing toward the north. "That's what got him."

The others looked up to see a bright star shining through a rift in the clouds. As they stared another appeared.

"The wind changed!" Phil continued excitedly. "It's clearing off. We'll get out yet. We'll be on his track at daylight."

When dawn came they had started, pushing on toward the west, again only six hours behind. The day was bright and cold, Solomon's trail plain and fresh, and they made good time until dark. The next day it was the same, and when they camped that night they knew that they would be within the shelter of the timber the next forenoon.

This knowledge was accepted differently by each of the three. To Wickson, brooding all day over thoughts he shared with no one, it seemed almost a matter of indifference. Joyce, watching him anxiously, trying vainly to read his intentions, felt that it mattered little that they had covered the most hazardous part of their journey if their happiness was still to be ruined by this man of implacable purpose.

To Phil alone the nearness of the timber was an unmixed relief. He alone seemed to realize what it meant to them in the way of shelter from storms, possibilities of meat, and best of all, a clear trail to the camp of Solomon Moses. After supper he did not go to sleep at once, as had been his custom. Tired as he was, he could not refrain from sitting by the fire and planning on the next day.

"None of us knows how near his camp is," he began. "We're liable to strike it most any time after noon. I'm not looking for an ambush, but I am afraid he may destroy what meat he had there or make off with it."

"But he won't have time to get far," Joyce offered.

"Yes, because he is a day and a half ahead. He didn't stop after he left us that night in the storm. And he must know that we're on his trail. The thing for us is to figure out what he will do."

"If his plan is to starve us, as he has been trying to do, he'll destroy any food there is in his camp," said Wickson.

"That's reasonable," said Phil. "Then what are we to do?"

"We're in a territory where there are other Indian hunters, and there is a chance that we'll run across a trapping trail."

"We've got to do that anyway, to win through, but the first question is to deal with Solomon himself. Then, when that's done, we've got to get on the trail of some hunter at once. We haven't much meat left, and there is only one more meal for the dogs, half a meal at that. When we find a hunter we've got to send him for another. We've got to get messengers to all the Fort Dease Indians and tell them that the weeteego

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is dead and won't bother them again. We've got to get a messenger to Fort Berens and have a boat-load of supplies start up the bay as soon as the ice goes out, and I've got to get back to Dease and be ready for the hunters when they do come."

"You! Back to Fort Dease!"

Joyce looked at him in consternation.

"Of course," said Phil. "I'm the one who gave out the debt and as the books are burned, I'm the only one who can collect the fur."

"Then I'm going with you."

It was the first time Phil had even considered where Joyce should go, once they were in a place of safety, and he did not answer.

"There is no other place for me to go," she protested.

"Perhaps you're right," said Phil. "You can get back to Savant House in the Summer. But we've got to handle Solomon Moses first. I'm going to keep ahead tomorrow so that if he has any trap you won't get caught. I don't think there will be, but we want to play as safe as possible. After we get hold of him, we can plan the next move."

PHIL had ignored the fact that Wickson was his superior officer, that he should look to him for orders and suggestions. Now that they were nearing possible safety, too, his thoughts turned at once to what must be done for the Company. His own future, and that of Joyce, must depend on his work, and, while he felt that he was just in his charge that Wickson was responsible for all the trouble the fact remained that ruin had come to Fort Dease while it was in his custody and that he must regain as much as possible of what had been lost.

Now that he was about to act, now that he was the aggressor, he forgot his weariness and the dangers that still lay ahead. He became more than ever the leader, the confident director of their activities, and he was eager for morning to come.

Joyce saw this, felt proud because of it, and in her exultation she glanced involuntarily at Wickson. The superintendent read her thoughts instantly and, to her surprise, he grinned good-humoredly.

"You're right, Boynton," he agreed. "And I guess I'll be on my feet in time to help. If you can carry things through as you have planned, nothing more can be expected. The only weak point is my own suggestion. Everything depends upon our getting food in Solomon's camp, if we find it, and then in running across the trail of a hunter. That last is not so easy as it sounds. There are not many Indians ahead of us and it's going to be luck if we find one before we starve."

"We've run greater risks than that so far, and there's Solomon to deal with first," said Phil as he prepared his robe for the night.

He tucked himself in beside the fire and was asleep at once. Joyce and Wickson still sat facing the blaze, for they had not driven themselves to exhaustion as had Phil.

In the presence of only the superintendent the girl's exultation soon vanished. Despite the man's friendly smile, despite his submission to all that Phil had planned, her fear of him only increased. He was letting Phil do the work, letting him get them out to a place of safety and save Fort Dease. But what after that? He had sent Phil to Penitentiary Post to get him out of the way, had given him an inconsequential station when his abilities deserved the best opportunity. Why would he not do something worse once he had returned to Savant House. It would be easily possible for him to ruin Phil's future with a report of the Winter that was properly colored, or uncolored. He need not lie. He need only omit part of the truth to damn Phil forever.

Wickson moved carefully to one side and began to spread out his robe. He had not been looking at Joyce, did not seem to know that she was there. His face was hard and resolute, had that expression she feared more than any other. As he lay down he saw Joyce staring at him.

"Wait until I'm on my feet!" he exclaimed as he pulled the robe over his face.

As usual, they were under way at daybreak the next morning. Phil was ahead with Wickson's rifle, the only weapon they had. The superintendent and Joyce rode on the toboggans. Two hours took them well into the spruce forest.

"I'll go on ahead now," said Phil as he stopped for his first breathing spell. "Keep about half an hour behind me. We may not reach his camp today, and it may be only a few miles from here. If I see any signs of him I'll lay something across the

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trail. You stop there until I call or come for you."

Joyce and Wickson waited the half-hour and then spoke to the dogs. There was a fair trail and the teams needed only an occasional urging. Joyce was in the lead and as she sat on the toboggan she looked ahead constantly, while always her ears were ready for the sound of a rifle shot or Phil's voice.

But nothing happened. Nothing lay across their path. Hour after hour passed. And then at noon Joyce suddenly stopped her dogs at a bend in the trail. Lying across it just ahead was a dead branch of a spruce.

"Better go ahead and tie the leader," said Wickson when he saw what had happened. "We don't want these dogs to get a smell of the camp and stampede us into it until Boynton is ready."

Joyce took a chain from the toboggan, waded through the snow to the head dog and fastened him to a tree. As she was about to turn back she saw something on the smooth surface beside the trail and went forward. Traced in the snow with a stick was a message from Phil:

Smelled smoke. Close.

"What is it?" called Wickson.

Joyce motioned silence and waded back to his toboggan.

"We mustn't make any noise," she said. "Phil wrote in the snow that he had smelled smoke just ahead."

"The wind is this way, but it means he is close. We ought to get action soon."

Joyce brushed the snow from a windfall, a few feet away and sat down facing the place where Phil had gone. For a time she waited quietly but as the minutes slipped by and there was no sound, nothing to tell what was happening in the forest ahead, she became restless. Once she glanced at Wickson and saw him watching her with a queer smile about his mouth.

"Hard on the nerves, eh?" he asked.

Joyce sprang from her seat and started toward her own toboggan. He was mocking her, taunting her with the possibilities of what might be happening ahead of them, and a wave of anger and hatred swept over her.

"I didn't mean anything like that," he said. "Sit down again. I've been wanting to speak to you."

"I don't know of anything you can say that will interest me!" replied Joyce fiercely, though she was conscious of a softened note in his voice she had never heard before.

"I think it will," he retorted, harshly now. "I imagine, woman-like, you have come to the conclusion that because you and Boynton didn't desert me back there at Fort Dease, because you have gone to a lot of trouble in an effort to save my life, I'll be good in the future?"

Joyce, startled by the brutal frankness of the question, only stared at him.

"What I wanted to say," Wickson continued, "is that you are mistaken if you do think so. Ever since we left Fort Dease I've been afraid that you would—afraid, that you would expect something of me.

"But," and he hitched himself upright and struck his knee with a mittened fist, "I'm not that sort. I wouldn't stoop to such a thing. It's not a man's way. It's not my way. If I have ever wanted anything I have gone after it. I have won it. I never let any consideration except my own ideas of what is right stand in my path. And I've always got what I went after. You've probably heard that since you've been in the North country. I always win."

The last had not been said boastingly. The man had spoken merely as if he were stating a well-known fact, but the significance of his words served only to bring fresh terror to Joyce, to leave her standing there in the snow staring at him, hating him, fearing him, and wholly unprepared for his next statement.

"But I don't want you. I thought I did. I thought I wanted you more than anything I had ever wanted. That's why I made that trip from Savant House to Fort Dease. That's why I started down the shore looking for you the minute I read the last word of your note. And if I still wanted you I wouldn't let Boynton or anything Boynton has done for me, or could do against me, stand in the way of my having you. But I don't want you.

"That's why I'm telling you this. I don't want you or him to think I quit a fight because you happened to do me a good turn. I'm not that sort, and if I wanted you now I wouldn't give you up."

He spoke harshly, vehemently, with a depth of passion that seemed altogether out of proportion with his words. He was so volcanic in his delivery that, despite the

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thought he had conveyed, Joyce still looked at him in speechless apprehension.

"I just wanted to make myself clear on that point," he continued more mildly. "I wanted you to know that you have nothing more to fear from me, if it's fear you have of me, and I wanted you to understand that it wasn't any softening on my part, any feeling of gratitude."

FOR a moment Joyce continued to stare. Her apprehension vanished as she finally grasped what he had said. A smile spread over her face, cracked the frosted skin of her cheeks and chin. And then she burst into uncontrolled laughter.

"What is it?" demanded Wickson angrily. "What's so funny?"

"I can't help it," she managed to say between choking fits of mirth. "It's all so—so—I——"

"Don't get hysterical," he advised.

"I'm not. I—you don't know much about women, do you?"

"I guess I know all that any one does. It isn't much."

"That proves it," she replied quickly. "A man who knows the first thing about women would never think of saying what you said to me. It's insulting, it's aggravating, it's maddeningly challenging."

She stopped suddenly and bit her lip.

"Don't make that mistake in my case," he growled. "I merely told you how I felt."

She looked at him skeptically for a moment but she could not but believe that the man was sincere in all the strange things he had said. She remembered, too, that unaccountable change she had felt in his attitude toward her and the friendly smile he had given her while Phil was asleep, and instantly curiosity possessed her.

"Would you mind," she asked hesitatingly, "mind explaining this sudden—this sudden change?"

For the first time she saw embarrassment in Wickson's face. His eyes fell before hers and he did not look up again when he spoke.

"There are some things a man doesn't like to talk about," he answered gruffly.

But Joyce, or any other woman, would not be rebuffed on such a quest.

"I ought to know wherein I failed," she protested. "It's only fair to me, since you have been so frank."

"You wouldn't understand."

"I would try to understand."

He looked at her appraisingly for a moment.

"Boynton was the cause of it all."

"Phil! How?"

"Oh, nothing he did. He couldn't have done anything to change me. It was something he said. It opened my eyes, gave me a new view of myself, and you weren't in that view, that's all."

It seemed final, and Joyce, despite the challenge of his attitude and words, despite her insistent desire to get at the bottom of this sudden change toward her, refrained from pressing the point. She resumed her seat on the windfall, and when she looked at Wickson again he began to speak.

"I may as well tell you," he announced. "You'll not believe it all, but it's the truth, every word of it, and I'd rather have you know than to think I have a soft streak.

"They say I am a savage," he continued. "They say I was born in the North and that I'm as hard as the North. Oh, they don't say it to me, but I know they say it. They think I'm all body, that I get ahead by the bulk of me. But they're fools. I've got a mind, I can use it, and I can out-think any of them. They say I bull into things regardless, but I don't. I reason everything out. Or I always did until you came. Now I've reasoned you out.

"Not until you came to Savant House did I ever go off my head. I did completely then. And when I did, I lost the two things which have meant most in my life. You did that to me."

He stopped speaking and Joyce was unaccountably affected. She forgot that it was her power that had done this, overlooked entirely that he had paid an unconscious tribute to her beauty and desirability, forgot even that John Wickson was suffering as she had hoped he would suffer. She remembered only that she was listening to the most appealing thing in the world, a confession of weakness by a strong man. She felt that she must say something but she did not know what it could be. Then Wickson looked up quickly.

"But you never can do it again," he resumed fiercely. "Now I know how little you really count in my life. I see how unimportant you are to me compared to what I owe to the Company."

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"To the Company!" exclaimed Joyce involuntarily.

"Yes, to the Company. All my life I have known that I was serving it faithfully, giving it all my strength, all my energy, all my ability to win. Then you came. For the first time I forgot it. I sent Boynton off to Dease when he should have had a post where he would be given a chance to do the work he can do best. When I knew he was in trouble I let him get out the best he could. I wanted him out of the way. I wanted you.

"Then when I learned you had gone to Dease I started after you at once. I went down the shore after you, and I was going to take you back. And then you did the second thing to me. You took away all my pride in my ability to win through myself, made me a coward, a weakling, ready to win by letting Boynton go away and die in the storm while he was looking for you. That brought me to. I saw what I had become, how I had failed myself, and worst, of all had failed the Company. I resolved to win back everything I had lost.

"That morning when we stopped to wait for daylight and Boynton wouldn't go on and kill Solomon Moses, I was beside myself. Your life, my life, Boynton's life, nothing counted in my desire to undo the wrong I had done the Company. And then Boynton said that which explained me to myself. He said I thought only of the Company, but that he could keep his balance. And I knew at once that he was right. He was balanced. He was balanced with you in his life. I wasn't and I never could be. I live for only one thing, the Hudson's Bay Company, and there isn't room for anything else in my life. I thought you meant everything to me, but when he said that I saw that you never could mean anything worth while. No woman can. I wasn't made to be influenced by a woman. I wasn't made to share anything with one. I saw that as soon as I got you I would forget you. I'd go back to my first sweetheart, the only one I ever had or ever will have."

Wickson had raised himself up so that he sat on the top of the load. His face was more gentle than Joyce had ever believed it could be. His eyes were lighted as are only those of a man who tells of the biggest thing in his life. He seemed transformed by the passion of an ideal.

"You don't know what it means," he continued. "You can't ever know. But my father and his father were brought up in the service and died in it. I have never known anything else. It has been responsible for every act of my life. It means everything to me. I'd die tomorrow for it. I'd do anything to serve it. I slipped once, when you came, but I'll make up for that. I'll give everything I've got, everything I can get, to the once, big, ideal of my life. It's the Company, the men in the Company, and the memory of the men who have made it what it is, the memory of the countless ones who have lived and died for it, that I love. You! I only thought I loved you. There's no room for you in my life. I'm not built that way. Boynton is. He can love you and be loyal to the Company. He's balanced when he has you both. I lost my balance. I couldn't have two things in my life. Thank God I saw it in time."

CHAPTER XVIII

SOLOMON GETS HIS MEAT

AFTER Phil had left Joyce and Wickson to follow more slowly and had gone on alone through the spruce forest he began to realize the difficulties before him. As hour after hour went by and there was no sign of the Indian having stopped, or of his camp, misgivings and anxiety added to his nervousness. So much depended upon his success, so many things might bring failure.

Phil knew that Solomon expected pursuit. The Indian could tell even the approximate time when the dog teams would reach his camp. He had gained a big lead by traveling night and day, and there would be plenty of time for him to destroy whatever meat he had or to double back beside his trail and lie in ambush. He might do neither of these things, but lead his pursuers in a circle, crossing and recrossing his trail, until they perished from exhaustion and starvation.

But as Phil hurried on, driven to greater speed by the necessity of quick action, fearful of every thicket because it might shelter Solomon and his trade gun, an encouraging thought came to him. The Indian would reach his camp tired and hungry. He would have meat there, and in the presence of meat he could not maintain his cau-

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tion or his sanity. If Phil could strike his camp just after one of these debauches his work would be easy.

The idea brought confidence and a new burst of speed, and he pressed on with less fear of an ambush. He became more and more certain that he would find Solomon in a stupor and consequently was wholly unprepared for the smell of smoke that suddenly came to his nostrils.

Instantly he stopped, found a dead branch to lay across the trail, traced his message in the snow, and then squirmed into the brush on one side and began to work his way forward. But as he slipped the mitten from his right hand and let it dangle by a string that his trigger finger might be ready, he remembered his promise to Joyce. As he considered it he found that, even without the pledge, he would hesitate to shoot the Indian in cold blood. Just what chance for his life he would give Solomon he had not decided when he saw the teepee in an open spot just ahead of him.

The flap over the door was down and smoke was coming from the hole at the peak, a light, hazy smoke that rose swiftly, evidence of a bright fire inside. And a bright fire meant that Solomon was awake, alert.

As Phil stood there in the brush debating his next move the Indian decided it for him. The flap was pushed back and Solomon crawled out. As he rose to his feet he listened, looking down the trail by which he had come. Then his eyes quickly swept the edge of the opening until they found Phil.

But even as Phil knew that he was discovered, even as his lips framed the words in Cree, "stand still," Solomon had leaped backward and disappeared behind the teepee. Phil sprang forward at once, running out to one side to catch a glimpse of the Indian if possible. But he had already reached a dense thicket a few yards behind his camp and had disappeared.

Phil started after him without hesitation. Solomon was without snow-shoes and could not go far before he was overtaken. But the man had gone through the middle of a clump of tangled spruce saplings and Phil stumbled and tripped and forced his way with difficulty.

When he emerged in larger, more open timber the Indian was not in sight. His trail was plain, however, and Phil started after him, confident that he could soon overtake him. The spruce became thinner and the ground began to rise gradually until he burst through a fringe of brush and came out on the crest of a low ridge.

Before him was spread out a great, shallow bowl, perhaps two hundred yards in width and bare of trees. Here and there were small clumps of brush, while in the center the ground rose gently to a little knoll that was cut off squarely on the right.

Running straight toward this knoll, and less than one hundred yards from him, was Solomon. Phil raised his rifle, intending to shoot over the man's head, but even as his eyes lined up with the sights he became conscious of a movement on the edge of the bowl at his right. The next instant there flowed over the rim and down toward the center of the depression a herd of at least twenty caribou. They appeared singly and in pairs, bounding through the snow, stringing down the slope.

As Phil watched, too startled by their sudden appearance to act, a halt in Solomon's flight turned his attention again to the Indian. He, too, had seen the caribou, and instantly he ceased to be the fugitive. He dropped into the snow and crawled forward swiftly. His shaggy back was not unlike that of a great bear as he wallowed along in the deep drift, while the stealth of his actions and the quick, alert movements of his head gave the impression of some huge beast of prey.

Despite the deep snow and the steep ascent, Solomon reached the top of the knoll in an incredibly short time. Not once had he turned to see if he were pursued. Not once had his attention been on anything except the approaching caribou. At the edge he crouched, tense, expectant. And then as the first of the herd passed beneath him he sprang out and down upon the back of the leader, a big, galloping bull.

If Solomon had stalked like a wolf and leaped like a bear, he assailed his prey as does a lynx or mountain lion. Far away as he stood, Phil could hear a snarl and a shriek as the caribou went down to its knees and the two rolled over and over.

For a moment they were hidden by the flying snow, and then the bull emerged from the smother, rearing and striking and trying to run, snorting, wild-eyed, driven

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to the extreme of exertion by the strange, hairy, odorous thing that clung about its neck.

Solomon's mania when eating frozen meat was as nothing compared with his frenzy now that hot, dripping flesh was within his grasp. His arms were clasped about the caribou just back of its head, and as he shrieked and roared he snapped again and again at the long ears, tore at them with his teeth until the blood spurted, clung to them, and shook them as a terrier does a rat. Solomon was after his meat. He had found the caribou.

As Phil recovered from his amazement and realized that the Indian's mania had driven him to attack a bull caribou barehanded he started at once down the slope, only to halt when still within the shelter of the brush. The herd, stopped and startled by the attack upon its leader, had turned in fresh panic and plunged through the deep snow straight toward where he was standing.

Meat! Life-giving, strengthening, saving meat, was within his grasp. There was plenty for Joyce, plenty for him, plenty for Wickson. There were three big meals a day, not two slim ones. There was food for the dogs. He could take that vigor and strength and speed, that wild, reckless energy, that was plunging up the slope toward him, harness it, store it, use it to gain safety, success, happiness.

There was a choking sensation in Phil's throat as he cocked his rifle. Solomon and his struggle were forgotten. There was a smile as he compared his own emotions upon seeing the herd rush toward him with the Indian's when he grasped a frozen chunk of meat in his hands, but as he lifted his rifle and aimed at the largest of the animals he was thinking most of the fact that the luck had changed, that he was freed from the constant, depressing nightmare of hunger.

Once, twice, three times, he fired. Coolly, calculatingly, painstakingly, he sighted and pulled the trigger. Without hurry or excitement he plunged the lever down and back. The herd stopped. Was there danger everywhere? Which way next? And while the paralyzed animals debated Phil fired steadily until the hammer clicked on an empty chamber. The gun was empty, but he had dropped four caribou with seven shots. Another was barely crawling away, would never reach the other side of the bowl.

THE herd had turned and rushed back, and now it disappeared over the opposite ridge, almost in the direction in which it had come. But Phil did not see the last of them go. He had plunged down the slope at once toward the battle that still raged at the bottom.

Had the bull borne his antlers, Solomon Moses might have had a chance. The fury of his attack, the strength of his mania-driven body, the utter disregard for injury and the deep snow would have gone far, with the leverage of the horns, to bring the caribou to his knees. He might possibly have broken its neck.

But the animal's head was bare except for the two long ears, now bloody and tattered, and there was nothing to give Solomon a secure hold. Though he struck and slashed with his feet as a lynx slices with its hind claws, he accomplished nothing. His arms were clasped about the bull's neck and he could not let go.

As Phil started toward them the caribou's terror had begun to change to anger. It leaped and whirled, and the Indian was snapped out until his feet swung above the drifts. It reared so that Solomon hung clear of the ground, and all the time its efforts became more fierce and more varied while its opponent's strength was obviously shrinking.

But if the Indian's vigor diminished his spirit became more ferocious. As Phil came nearer he could hear the snarls and the growls, the roars of rage, the purely animal cries of a beast in its greatest ecstasy. The man snapped and tore with his teeth, striving to kill by sheer fury and impetuosity. His attack was planless, heedless, simply a blind, snarling, tearing, snapping onslaught inspired by the lust for flesh.

Phil halted twenty yards away and began slipping cartridges into his rifle. But, with his weapon ready, he hesitated. He could not fire into that swirling, plunging mass and be sure of his mark. There was no justification for his risking himself by going closer.

As he debated what he should do one of the bull's violent lunges finally loosened Solomon's arms. The Indian hung on only by the strong grip of his teeth in a tattered

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ear. But as he swung there, arms groping for a new hold, the caribou struck with both forefeet. A grunt was driven from Solomon's lungs. His teeth tore lose from the dripping ear. The fur flew in a cloud from the breast of his skin coat where the sharp hoofs had struck, and the Indian went back and down into the snow.

Instantly the bull was on top of him, bellowing its rage, stamping and tearing and ripping with its hoofs. One of Solomon's arms struck up, but against those shod flails he could do nothing. In a few seconds he ceased to fight back.

Still the bull continued to strike and trample, beating and slicing the now inert body. Involuntarily Phil, his rifle forgotten, let out a roar of protest. The bull stopped, looked at him, sniffed the air and then loped off by the side of the bowl.

As Phil started forward he was stopped by the report of a gun that came from beyond the ridge. He stared unbelievingly, only to hear a second, then a third and a fourth. Instantly he saw the reason for the flight of the caribou. They were being pursued by Indians when he and Solomon had met them, and the herd had been turned back upon the hunters.

As he realized what the shooting meant he became dizzy with the delight of it. He had killed the meat they needed. Now he had found the guides that were equally essential to success. Messengers to bear the news to the Fort Dease hunters, a messenger to Fort Berens, some one to take Wickson back to Savant House, all had come at once!

And the weeteego, the cause of it all! Phil did not doubt for a minute that Solomon Moses was dead but he was hardly prepared for the battered, bloody unrecognizable mass of flesh and fur that lay stretched out on the red snow. In those brief seconds he had been literally torn to pieces. The poor, crazed savage had fallen a victim to his own lust for meat.

Phil turned away to dispatch the fifth caribou, which still floundered slowly up the side of the bowl. He cut its throat and those of the other four, and when his task was finished he looked across to the opposite ridge to see four Indians standing there watching him.

That night the Indians camped with the Hudson's Bay Company people at Solomon Moses's teepee. The meat had been dressed and hauled up. The hunters had seen what remained of Solomon Moses, and, though they never knew who he was, they were convinced that the weeteego would never again haunt Fort Dease.

WICKSON had immediately taken charge of operations and was busy planning and directing. In the morning they started for the nearest of the Indians' camps, ten miles to the west, and the next morning two of the men went out with the news for the other hunters of the district and to get additional dogs and men.

While Wickson chose a teepee, Phil and Joyce decided to cook their own supper in the open that night, and it was around the camp-fire that Phil first learned of what the superintendent had said to Joyce that noon on the trail.

"Didn't want you!" he exclaimed indignantly. "The bear! He doesn't know——"

He stopped. Joyce was laughing.

"You would rather have him as a rival than contemptuous," she said.

Then she became suddenly serious.

"But Phil, it was a greater relief to me than to know Solomon Moses was dead, than to know we were not going to starve. Don't you see? A man like that, a man who is governed as he governs himself, who stops at nothing—why, Phil, I would always have been afraid of him, even with you."

He did not resent this, for he knew how Joyce meant it, and he had suddenly found that he had nothing except pity for Wickson.

"Poor devil," he said as he stared at the fire. "What a lonesome life he has."

Joyce smiled but she did not dispute him. Only after a long silence she said:

"At least his sweetheart will never grow old, or fade, or be moody."

"What do you mean?" demanded Phil indignantly.

"Nothing that you could understand in your present frame of mind. But there is something else to talk about. I am going back to Savant House with Wickson."

"With him! That long trip! Joyce, you can't!"

"I can, and I must."

"But——"

"I signed a contract with the Hudson's Bay Company in London. I agreed to do certain things. Is there any reason why I should not fulfil that contract? Is there any reason why I should not be as loyal to

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the Company as you have been, or as Wickson is?"

"But you! You are a woman! It never was expected. Why run that risk for a fool reason?"

"Listen," she commanded. "I told you about my father, how he had to leave Canada, how I came over here largely because I felt that I must live the life for him, do something of what he had to give up. That is the way I have always felt, that it was not I but dad who is here, and I have tried always to do the things that I knew he would do. Do you think otherwise I would have had the courage to make that journey from Savant House to Dease, or that I would have dared to go out alone to find you?

"No, Phil, I have my own ideals, and my own obligations, and I am going to fulfil them. I am going back to Savant House and give those children a year's schooling, as I agreed to do. I have no more dread of returning with Wickson than I would of making the trip with my own father. And you have enough to keep you busy without being burdened with me. Only you must ask Wickson for a transfer. I know he will give it to you. In the Summer you can come back to Savant House. Then I will be yours, not the Company's."

But Phil did not ask Wickson. That night the superintendent summoned him to the teepee.

"Boynton, I want you to start for Berens in the morning," he said. "Take two teams and two men. Get supplies there and be ready to go up the bay to Fort Dease as soon as the ice permits. And as soon as you get there and take in the fur, start the Indians up the Cut-Bank to get timber for new buildings. You know what is needed. Rebuild the fort."

Phil did not reply. He only stared at Wickson while anger and revolt engulfed him. To rebuild Fort Dease meant that he must remain there another year. It meant that he would not see Joyce for eighteen months. It meant that his opportunity to do the work he could do best was put off, perhaps indefinitely. It meant that, in Wickson's mind, it was still Penitentiary Post.

But the youth who had flaunted his contempt in the face of Superintendent Borthwick the Winter before was not there in the teepee with Wickson. Something had driven out the heedlessness and the recklessness and the impetuosity. Something had widened his vision, had tempered his ideas. Duty and responsibility had assumed a new significance. They were no longer shadowed by personal desires or aversions.

"Very well," Phil said, and he turned and went out.

THE first of July Phil arrived at the mouth of the Cut-Bank River, at the site of what had been Fort Dease. The supplies were unloaded and stored in tents brought for the purpose. Soon afterward the Indians came with their fur. Phil remembered their debts as best he could and settled accounts. Then he sent the entire band up the river for timber and dispatched the boats to Fort Berens with the fur and for more supplies. For the second time he was left alone in monotonous, desolate Penitentiary Post.

July passed and August came. One evening while Phil was cooking supper in his tent he heard a call from the river bank and rushed out to see a white man and two Indians coming toward him.

"Hello, Boynton," said the stranger as he extended his hand. "I'm Morris, from Savant House. Passed your Indians with the rafts several days ago. Here's your mail."

With scant courtesy for his guest, Phil opened the flat bag and drew out two letters. One was in the same writing that he had found that March morning upon his return from Solomon Moses's shore camp. The other was addressed with a typewriter and bore the seal of the Company.

"You'll pardon me, old man," he managed to say as he tore open the first envelope. "Long time since mail day, you know." Morris grinned knowingly.

But Phil was already looking at the letter. The first page was all right, the tenth, and the thirtieth. Joyce was safe.

He tore open the second. There was one sheet, typewritten. He read:

I am leaving in the morning for the McKenzie River, where I take charge of a new district. My successor will be here in the Fall. Before leaving I have sent Mr. Morris to take charge of Fort Dease. You are to return at once to Savant House. Mr. Osborne has obtained a transfer to a post on the new railroad in Ontario so that he may send the children to school. You are to succeed him as manager here. Please act upon these instructions at once. JOHN WICKSON.

P. S.—The missionary arrived here last week on his annual visit.

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KHLIT

by H.A. Lamb

Author of "His Excellency the Vulture"

WHEN the noonday sun struck through clouds and fell upon the saber on his knee, Khlit made up his mind it was time to eat. Putting aside the sheepskin rag with which he had been wiping specks of rust from his weapon, Khlit drew from the pocket of his coat several hard, barley cakes. These he broke over the silver heel of his boot and munched. Thus did Khlit satisfy his noonday hunger.

All the forenoon, seated beside one of the streets of the Zaporogian Siech, as the Cossacks of the sixteenth and well into the seventeenth century called their isolated war encampment—an island midway between the Russian and the Tatar banks of the great river Dneiper—Khlit had been polishing his cherished saber, a curved Turkish blade, of Damascus forging. That morning, when he had awakened, after a night of wine guzzling, Khlit had heard rumors of war bandied about the *kurens*, or barracks, and, like the scent of game to a wolfhound, the tidings had set the warrior to nursing his sword.

Peering out under shaggy brows, the keen eyes of the Cossack which every now and then sought the river, noticed a stirring among the *kurens*. Knights of the Siech were gathering in groups, to learn if there was truth in the rumors. As the hammering on blacksmith forges became louder, young Cossacks sprang to horse.

Khlit sat still, sheepskin hat on the back of his sunburnt head, bald save for the long scalp-lock that trailed over his shoulders. His gray, sheepskin coat was flung back under the rays of a midday sun, a broad leather belt making it fast at the waist. The warrior's costly nankeen breeches of brilliant red were tucked in his heavy boots. A short pipe stuck out from under his long, gray mustaches.

In Khlit's mind the matter was clear enough. He could not understand why his comrades bickered and bayed like dogs about war when all the *Koshevoi Ataman*, their leader, needed to do was to say the word and forth the Zaporogian Siech would fare, thousands in number, the flower of the world's knighthood, ready to take the field against Turk, Tatar, Pole, or other foe of the Orthodox Church.

Why, wondered Khlit, was there any hesitation, when their godfather, the Czar himself, had appointed them watch-dogs of the Ukraine and the Russian land? Watch-dogs of stout heart and good red blood did not lie in kennels and stuff their carcasses with food. Nor did they wait for an adversary to come to the kennel door and poke a stick at them before they sallied forth. Why then, the Cossack asked himself did the flower of Ukraine linger on the island encampment in the middle of the wide Dneiper and waste the strength and sinews of the young men in mimic battles suited to the entertainment of women, not full grown men?

In a people where few grow old before cut down by an enemy sword, Khlit had

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been fortunate to survive many wars. The old knight had marched into Poland and he had laid waste the territory of the khans hundreds of *versts* away across the Volga. In his cottage in the village of Rusk he kept treasures of these campaigns, weapons wrested from the unbelievers, ransoms gleaned from wealthy Turks, and pillage from sacked towns. But the eyes of Khlit did not turn toward the cottage. They searched the distant banks of the Dneiper where foes might be found. If his thoughts wandered to home, it was to the young Cossacks who were coming to the Siech from the village that day, and especially to Menelitza, his foster son who would join him before sundown.

A shout from a near-by group attracted his attention. Several Cossacks were crouched over dice, and one burly warrior who seemed to have met with bad fortune stood up with a curse. Hesitating a second, he tore off his heavy coat and boots and threw them on the ground. His sword had been claimed by his adversary as payment for all debts, and he signified that he would wager his coat and shoes against the sword, which he was loath to relinquish.

Those in the ring about them peered at the dice casually as the big Cossack threw, and one clapped him on the back with a loud laugh as the result was known. He had won.

Next the Cossack wagered his coat and shoes against some gold sequins of his adversary, a thin, hooked-nosed warrior with a scarred cheek. He lost.

Refusing all offers of further wagers, the Cossack thrust his sword in his belt and marched off up the street, swaying a little from the effects of drink. Coming abreast of Khlit he halted irresolutely.

"A health to you, noble sir," he muttered, raising a huge hand in drink-solemn greeting, "you are of the Rusk *kuren?* I know you among many, Khlit, *bggatyr*. That son of a devil's dog, Taravitch, diced me out of coat and shoes. And with the young Cossack brood coming from Rusk to our *kuren* tonight."

"Have you other boots, or money to buy them? There is talk of war," said Khlit after a moment's inspection of the other, whose face he now recognized.

"Hey—money?" The giant shook his head and grinned. "I gave the silver in my heels to the Jews for corn brandy last night. I have not the smell of a sequin."

"Then say to the *hetman* of our *kuren*," replied Khlit, "that I bid him give you boots and whatever you may need. There will be war, and the Siech will march."

"Hey—that is good," chuckled the Cossack. "I shall swagger before the striplings tonight."

"You can thank your sword for it, offspring of swine," explained Khlit, "for you would not lose that. A Cossack and his sword are one until death."

The giant shook his head, as though he did not grasp this piece of wisdom. Staggering, he went on his way, but no more wine was to pass his bearded lips. The magic word "war" was a talisman that brought the light of anticipation to his bloodshot eyes and purpose to his heavy steps. When the Siech went to war no drunkards were tolerated.

Khlit looked up a second time to find Taravitch, the successful gambler, watching him. Khlit mistrusted Taravitch, for the hook-nosed Cossack was a person rare among the folk of the Siech, a shrewd getter of money. To the open-handed warriors money was only a means to wine and weapons, to cherish it for itself was a symptom of the malady that afflicted the Jewish camp-followers. Taravitch was known to be a winner at dice or other games, a hard bargainer, and a heartless creditor. Many of the Cossacks had been poor and worse than poor for years at a stretch for owing Taravitch money.

On the other hand Taravitch had no love for Khlit whose name was coupled with much spoil and riches, and who was forever urging the men of the Ukraine to war, when the camp proved more profitable to Taravitch. If the truth were known, Khlit wasted no words of ceremony in speaking of the gambler, and some of these remarks had come to the ears of the other.

Several of the Cossacks who had been watching the dice, stood beside Taravitch and contemplated Khlit as the latter, his meal ended long since, wiped at his saber with the sheepskin cloth. Finally Taravitch was moved to speak.

"Hail to you, Khlit," he said, mouthing his words and watching the other the while, "do you polish your saber to show the young men who come to the Rusk *kuren* at sundown today? Or are you ready to give it to a better warrior and return to your cottage with the women?"

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There was a laugh at this from the watchers, but Khlit did not even look up.

"I have heard," continued Taravitch, "that the young men from Rusk are not as fine a lot as when we smoked our pipes in the ruins of Anatolian churches. Devil take them! None of the lot will come to camp as we did, like a good knight, with a brave display."

As it is the first test of his knighthood, the manner of a stripling's coming to the Siech for the first time, when he is of age, is taken as a measure of his bravery. If he comes gaily appareled and well mounted with a crowd of companions and makes his horse go through feats before the *hetmans*, he is well received. If he enters camp timidly, or shows any fear, he is held in dishonor by the Cossacks.

"Health to you, Taravitch," responded Khlit carelessly. "Do you watch when the son of Menelitza, my foster son, comes to the Siech. It will be a sight to brighten your heart. He is the offspring of a *bogatyr* —bred from a stock that excelled in courage all in our Russian land."

"Nay, Khlit," said Taravitch, his eyes narrowing as when he seized an advantage at dice. "The young Cossacks are weaklings. They are schooled in books and weaned by women. There are none in these days to leap their horse over the palisade about the Siech, breaking both their necks as Borodagy did once, or to come bearing a whole cask of wine on his shoulder for the *Koshevoi Ataman* and the *hetmans*."

"We will see, Taravitch," said Khlit.

"It will be poor sport," replied the gambler in scorn, "perchance your Menelitza will have courage enough to ride a horse and make the beast stand on three legs before us. A woman's feat!"

"The son of Menelitza," said Khlit slowly, "will come to the Siech as no other before him has come. You will see——"

"Hey!" Taravitch swung 'round on the spectators, but his glance still measured the old Cossack. "What nonsense are you mouthing? Do you think we are children, to believe that? Your precious Menelitza will come with a crowd, and none can tell him from the others!"

"The father of Menelitza ran his horse through a Tatar camp to fetch me from the grasp of the khan," said Khlit, unmoved, "and Menelitza will show you a feat of daring that will warm the hearts of the old men."

"A wager," cried Taravitch, "that Menelitza, who comes to the Siech at sundown, will not surpass all others in a feat of daring! My Arab stallion against a hundred sequins of gold. Ha, old fox, where is your valor?"

"No man has asked that upon the battlefield, Taravitch," replied Khlit, "but you shall have your wager. Only it will be a man's wager, not a child's plaything."

He paused and looked up calmly at the circle who pressed about them.

"In my house at Rusk," he went on, "are fifty goblets of silver and gold taken from the enemies of the Siech, Persian carpets several in number, rare swords from Turkey, four horses of the finest blood. Also Polish trophies and gold-chased armor, with a thousand sequins of gold. All this will I wager against your coin of five thousand sequins and your Arab horses. Come now, are you a stanch wolf, Taravitch, or a rabbit that dives into his burrow when he sees a man?"

Taravitch gazed at the Cossack as if fascinated. His eyes narrowed as he wet his lips. The riches Khlit had mentioned, he knew to be in the cottage at Rusk. Also, if Khlit pledged his word before witnesses the promise was good. Yet never had the gambler staked the bulk of his wealth on any one throw. The prospect dazzled him.

"Menelitza comes today, Khlit?" he asked, weighing his words.

"He has promised me," assented the old man.

"Then it is a wager." Taravitch turned to the watchers who gaped at him. "You have heard the terms," he cried, "and the wager—that Menelitza comes today to the Siech as none other has come before him. The wager is offered and accepted."

II

THE sun which had been high, was nearing the Russian bank of the Dneiper when the burly Cossack who had been befriended by the old Khlit returned to the spot and found his benefactor seated where he had been before. The bright saber still reflected the sun's rays. Khlit glanced up as he approached. The Cossack was again without coat and boots.

"Devil take you," Khlit said affectionately. "Can't you keep a coat upon your

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fat back? But tell me, is there any news of the approach of men from Rusk? It draws near sundown."

"Hey, old sword-eater," growled the Cossack, "I have heard of the wager you made. News of it has got from one end of the camp to the other. The noble knights are all watching to see the result. Nay, I gave your coat and boots away to one who needed them."

"Have the men from Rusk been sighted?"

"Hey? I don't know. Taravitch was talking about it to the knight who has charge of the ferry and the good man said he'd be flogged with a saber if the Dneiper wasn't rising and jumping about with the wind so much that it were a perilous task to take out the boat to shore. Beside, the oars are lost. So the fine fellow who pilots the boat told me."

"Lost!" Khlit's glance flickered over the Cossack. "Devil take the rascal, has he but the one boat? Where are the others?"

"Away up the river, Khlit," responded the big warrior with a hearty laugh at the discomfiture of his friend, "and old father Dneiper is growling to himself and gnashing his white teeth at the wind. Did Menelitza swear he would be in camp this day?"

"He swore it on a holy image, Waggle-Tongue," Khlit made reply, inspecting his sword. "And Menelitza does not waste his words for love of hearing himself bray. He will come at sundown."

The Cossack gazed at Khlit's shiny black boots admiringly.

"So you say, Khlit, *bogatyr*," he mused, "and the noble sirs maintain that your words are more to be trusted than a good sharp sword, or well-loaded pistol. Still, how can the son of your comrade arrive here when the ferryman has drunk two dozen glasses of corn brandy with that slimy lizard of a Taravitch, and Father Dneiper is shaking his hair in anger?"

"Did Taravitch make the ferryman drunk?" demanded Khlit thoughtfully.

"Aye, with corn brandy. And the oars are not to be found——"

"Did Taravitch hide them?"

"Hey? Most like. If a warrior will do one mischief he will not hold his hand at two. He has you by the scalp-lock, Khlit, and your riches are as good as in his pocket."

"It is not yet sundown."

"Nay, but the sun kisses his bed behind the mountains. Already the crowd of noble sirs who have gathered in the center of the Siech to watch for the fulfilment of your wager say that you have lost. Talk turns to the rumors of a Tatar khan seen near Rusk. Hey, but that is good news."

"Then we will hear it," declared Khlit.

Sheathing his sword, he tightened his belt and strode along by the giant, his gray eyes almost hidden under shaggy brows, his hands thrust idly in his pockets. As he went, Cossacks turned to look after him, for tidings of the great wager had stirred the interest of the Siech. Groups gathered in the center square of the Siech made way for him until the pair stood within arm's reach of the *Koshevoi Ataman*, and the *hetmans* who were discussing the appearance of the Tatars in the Ukraine.

"The khan has spread his wings near Rusk, Khlit," said one of the hetmans, "the Tatar dogs took a *batko* of the Orthodox Church and burned him for the village to see. That was an ill deed. They have also burned our churches. The Zaporogian Siech girds itself for war."

Khlit tugged at his mustache with pleasure.

"That is a good word in my ears, noble sir," he grinned. "Are all the worthy knights in favor of setting out?"

"Nay, Khlit," the *hetman* shook his shaggy head, "there are many who say that the burning of one *batko* is not enough to make the Siech set out. Methinks they are the dogs who like to lie in the sun and scratch. They say the messenger who brought the tidings lies, and that it is a plot of those who want war."

"Who is the messenger?" demanded Khlit, frowning.

"Yon fellow in the big cloak and new boots. He came to the camp in sore plight. He swears the khan is near Rusk."

Khlit's gaze fell on a slender Cossack, dark-skinned, who stood quietly before the *Koshevoi Ataman* watching the warriors around him curiously. The stranger seemed not to interest Khlit.

"Hey," said the giant, "he is the vagabond I gave my coat and boots to. He came to me near the ferry——"

He was silenced by murmurs from a group of Cossacks who stood near, and who began to address the *Koshevoi Ataman*. One of their number thrust through the crowd hastily and Khlit pulled at his mustache as he recognized Taravitch.

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"A word to the *Koshevoi Ataman*," cried Taravitch in a loud voice. "This man who says that he comes from Rusk this afternoon lies, for no man has come from the shore to the island."

"How is that, Taravitch?" asked Khlit quickly.

"It is true," persisted the gambler. "I know, for early in the afternoon I saw the ferryman asleep by the shore, so filled with wine he could not stand. And there are no other boats. So no one could come from shore across Father Dneiper. Look!"

Taravitch pointed, and the Cossacks looked out over the river. The red glow of sunset flamed on the tossing crests of the waves, with here and there a white fleck of foam. The wind from the west slapped their faces and pulled at their beards. Truly, Father Dneiper was in no gentle mood.

Taravitch, who loved better the tranquility of the Siech than the hardships of war, smiled as he felt the amazement and concern of the gathering at his words. He had made his point. Already he had won, he felt, a huge wager from the wise Khlit, and now he went on to drive home his plan to discredit the messenger.

The giant Cossack stepped forward, but Taravitch was before him.

"You can see for yourselves, noble sirs," he said eagerly, "that not even one favored by God could cross these waters. No man has ever done that of himself. And it is known that the ferry has not been used——"

"You hear, noble sirs," the deep voice of Kholt broke in, "what he said. *No man has ever done that.* You have heard the words of Taravitch."

"Aye, it is the truth," the gambler shot a puzzled glance at the warrior, "and so the man who says he comes from Rusk lies——"

"Not so, Taravitch," Khlit cried again. "Listen to me, noble sirs. The messenger tells the truth. He is a man of honor, and he is of Rusk."

He strode forward and clapped his hand on the young Cossack's coat. With a twist he flung it from the other's shoulders. The undergarment of the messenger showed strangely dark and heavy, and Khlit with another wrench, wrung a stream of water from his sleeve.

"This is Menelitza, noble sirs, son of the *bogatyr*," he cried. "He has brought you tidings of war from Rusk. When there was no boat to bring him to the Siech, he swam through the waves. Many saw him swim ashore, and gave him coat and boots."

The young Cossack's face flushed red with the gaze of the throng and he would have stepped back, but Khlit held him firmly, searching the crowd with his gray eyes.

"This is Menelitza," he said again, "who has come to the Siech as none other before him. Is there any Cossack now who would speak of lies?"

Silence greeted him, until broken by the *Koshevoi Ataman* who announced that the Zaporogian Siech smelled war and that the swords of the knights would no longer be rusted.

That is all of the tale of the coming of Menelitza to the Siech, save perhaps for the word of the giant Cossack who repeated afterward that that night, when the Siech was in slumber, he being one of the watchmen, saw Khlit drag a pair of oars from under a *kuren*. And the Cossack wondered, for there was but one pair of oars in the Siech—belonging to the ferry.

Khlit glanced around and seeing no one near him in the gloom, carefully replaced some furs which had concealed the oars from discovery during the day. Following him, the Cossack saw Khlit carry the oars to the ferry which lay on the shore and place them inside.

When the noble sirs heard that, they laughed and told the big Cossack he had been drinking corn brandy, and when they asked Khlit, he also laughed and said the man had been drinking corn brandy.

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The MOLLY MAN

By Hapsburg Liebe

Author of "In Full of Account," "Into the Hills," etc.

HARTLEY BRIGHTON did not fully realize the seriousness of life until he had been forcibly ejected from a coal-carrying freight train in an isolated spot somewhere in Eastern Tennessee. Never before had he been so weary, so sore, so hungry. When the train and its rough-handed crew had disappeared between two low hills, he sat himself down on one end of a greasy cross-tie and turned his pockets out. There was only one bare, brown penny. Brighton smiled grimly through the smut that covered his face.

"Oh, for a few dollars of that money I used to throw away," he muttered.

He was wide awake now. To himself he admitted that he had been a mollycoddle.

Brighton was wholly unused to rough things. He was big, but he was—well, unformed. His parents had died early, and he had been taken in hand by a bachelor uncle who was a figure of more or less prominence in the lumber world. Then, when Brighton was twenty-four and somewhat spoiled by his rather indulgent kinsman, there had been a quarrel, and he had left both home and Philadelphia.

"You're a mollycoddle," the irate old lumberman had said when they parted. "Cut open one of your veins, and thin gruel would run out. Think I'm mistaken? Then prove that you're a man, and not a mollycoddle, and blast me if I don't take you into my business as a partner!"

There was one consolation for young Brighton; he was leaving no sweetheart behind him. He had never cared much for women, because, perhaps, they had cared too much for him. Somehow they had seemed a little soft.

He rose stiffly. Night was coming on and there was no house in sight. Never had he slept out-of-doors; he was glad that it was Summer, and not Winter. He set out along the railroad, walking on the outside of the eastern rail.

In the thick darkness that soon came down upon him, Brighton did not notice that he had left the main track and was walking along a siding; nor did he notice it when he left the siding and walked out an ill-ballasted railroad that led straight toward the heart of the great, dim-blue mountains.

After making some three miles in the pitchy blackness, a yellow star of lamplight greeted his tired eyes. It shone from one of the windows of a log cabin a few rods up the mountainside to his left. A crooked, dirty white streak of a path, which caused Brighton to think vaguely of the trail of a giant serpent, stretched from the railroad to the cabin's front door. Brighton turned toward the light and was at once greeted by the warning growl of a dog; then the strong voice of a mountaineer hailed him from the house of logs—

"Who's that?" sharply, like the challenge of a sentinel.

"What are the chances for a night's lodging and something to eat—for a man who hasn't any money?" Hartley Brighton asked desperately.

"Plumb fine, pervided ye can sleep on a pine-needle mattruss and eat sech grub as we've got," was the quick answer.

Even the worst mountaineer is long on hospitality.

Brighton went in, washed himself free of the greater part of the coal smut and shortly afterward sat down to a home-made table laden with the best food the country afforded.

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When he had satisfied his appetite, his grizzled host drawled through a cloud of strong tobacco smoke:

"I reckon you're on yore way over to Troublesome."

"Troublesome?" Brighton didn't understand.

"Yeah. Troublesome Creek, whar the loggin'-camp is at. I reckoned you must be agoin' over thar atter a job o' work."

"No," said Brighton. "I'm on my way to Knoxville."

The mountaineer smiled.

"Knoxville! Man, you must ha' got sort o' tangled in the dark. You're sev'ral mile offen the main railroad, off on a loggin' railroad. They're a-needin' men over at Troublesome. Ye could shore git a job thar. But it's a bad place, plumb pizen bad. Rough as busted iron. They tell me 'Basher Joe' McMackin he thrashes everybody 'at goes thar to work. He's the bully, y'know. Every loggin'-camp has to have a bully as well as a superintender. They tell me nobody but Tom Lane never could handle Basher. Tom's the superintender, and some fightin' man hisself, ef you'll believe me—only he don't hardly ever fight. Yes, it takes a reel man to stay over thar, a *reel* man." Then he added, after a slight pause; "You're shore big enough, mister."

Brighton's thoughts went backward. Once more he turned over in his mind his uncle's half-sneering words, "You're a mollycoddle; cut open one of your veins, and thin gruel would run out."

"I've decided to go to Troublesome Creek and get a job," Brighton finally told his host.

His gray eyes were almost fierce with determination. He was going to prove, for his own satisfaction, that he could be a real man; that the stuff which ran in his veins was red blood and not thin gruel.

"And good luck go wi' ye," said the mountaineer. "I'll show ye in the mornin' how to go a nigh way; the railroad it winds pow'ful in the valleys, y'see. Ef you had struck up from Johnsville in the lowland, ye'd ha' saved yeself a mighty long lot o' walkin'. The's a hoss path leads from Johnsville to Troublesome, y'know. By this nigh way I'm agoin' to show ye, ye'll hit the hoss path a mile this side o' the loggin'-camp.

"You're shore to like Super Tom Lane. And take my edvice here; don't you look angle-eyed at Tom's gyurl. I mean Cath. Purty? The good Lord! And as sharp as a briar. Tom he hain't got no other children, and no wife, and he thinks the world was made only for Cath to kick around and play with. Basher's a fool about her; but Tom won't hardly let him speak to her—they tell me. Well, are you ready for ye pine-needles, mister?"

Brighton was. The spare bed was in the loft, which was reached by means of a worn ladder. The guest went up stiffly, threw off his outer clothing, blew out the smoky lamp, went to bed and covered himself with a homespun woolen blanket; even in late June, the nights are cool in the big hills. No other bed had ever felt so good, and in this there was a whole golden sermon for Hartley Brighton. He smiled gratefully at the diamond-like star that looked down upon him through a knothole in the roof, then closed his eyes and fell into a dreamless sleep which lasted for eight hours.

WHEN he had breakfasted, Brighton thanked the hillman and his wife, received directions as to how to go to Troublesome Creek by the nearer way, and set out through the riotously blooming laurels. Just before noon he crossed the crest of a ridge and saw a bridle-path in a laurel-filled ravine below him. And he saw something else. Across the ravine, some seventy-five yards from him, a slim, bareheaded young woman in a very neat-looking dress of pale blue and white, was breaking off laurel blossoms.

Riding up the path to his right was a young man in the clothing of the city; his horse was a sleek bay; suspended from his shoulder by a narrow strap was a small satchel of black leather, and a short-barreled rifle lay across his saddle front. Stealing down the ravine to his left, one a few rods in advance of the other, were two big and stalwart broad-hatted, booted and corduroyed men, and each of them held a heavy revolver in readiness. Unaccustomed as he was to life in the wilds, Hartley Brighton realized instantly that he was about to witness a hold-up!

Not one of the four had seen Brighton. He stepped behind a clump of laurel and watched the doings of the three men with a deep interest; for the time being, he quite forgot the girl across the ravine. That he might have called a warning to the horseman did not occur to him until long afterward.

Through the branches of the clump of

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laurel that concealed him, he saw the two big men hide themselves, still a few rods apart, in the scrub beside the trail. The horseman rode on unsuspectingly. Then the foremost of the two corduroy-clad giants thrust out his revolver, while he himself remained almost wholly sheltered from view, and called in tones that were as gruff as the growl of a bear and plainly disguised——

"Drop it!"

The young man on horseback drew rein with a start. He half lifted his rifle; the man in the near-by scrub stopped the movement by calling again—

"Drop it!"

The rifle was promptly lowered. The leathern bag fell to the ground with the musical clink of many coins.

"Now go back!"

Without a word the horseman turned his mount and rode down the narrow trail. When he was out of sight, the robber stepped out of the brush, picked up the satchel, and thrust it under his clay-colored coat. Brighton now saw a face that he knew he never could forget; it was black-bearded, and strong and grave rather than bad. Then the other big man rose in the laurels, leveled his revolver, and cried triumphantly—

"Drop it!"

The bearded man wheeled and saw the frowning barrel of the other's weapon, saw the cruel black eyes and the hard, stone-like, smoothly-shaven face below them. He dropped the bag, entered the thickly-standing laurels, and almost ran across the hill toward the camp on Troublesome Creek.

Brighton's heart was now throbbing wildly. Into his blood had crept the spirit of something strange and daring and red. As the second robber straightened with the leathern bag in his great hands, Hartley Brighton cried out with a bold and rasping gruffness:

"Drop it! Drop it quick—*quick!* And get over the hill, or I'll shoot you full of holes!"

The command was obeyed without question! The second robber hastened after the first. With his heart in his throat, and with a queer, pale smile on his lips, Brighton stole down to the trail and took up the satchel. He was wondering how he would return it to its rightful owner without incriminating himself, when a clear, distinctly feminine voice rang out from behind him:

"You will please give me that bag!"

Brighton turned and found himself looking into the muzzle of a repeating rifle of very small bore, a mere toy. It was in the hands of the young woman he had seen across the ravine. For a moment the two stood there and stared at each other silently. Then Brighton laughed outright. The girl was too pretty—too adorably, perfectly pretty—to seem so serious over anything.

"So it's 'Hands up!' to the fourth robber," he said easily. He wasn't afraid of her. "Certainly you may have the bag. Perhaps it is really yours. I took a chance on bluffing, and it worked—and nearly frightened me to death! I'm Hartley Brighton," he smiled, "of Philadelphia. I'm going to the place they call Troublesome, to get work."

There was no word of reply. Brighton felt that he had at last found one woman who was in no manner soft; had he been a closer student of human nature, he would have recognized a woman in an extremity. For want of anything better to say, he went on:

"I wonder if you saw the beginning of the little drama?"

"Did you?" came quickly.

"Yes."

She lowered the little rifle and went to him, moving with an unconscious and willowy grace of carriage that he was not slow to admire, and put a slender well-shaped hand on his arm. Her voice was laden with anxiety—

"Did you know those men?"

"Not one of them," answered Brighton; and the girl's countenance lightened somewhat.

"Why are you going to Troublesome?" she asked in a tone of pleading. "It's rough there, terribly rough—for such a man as you. If I were you, I—I think I'd go back to Philadelphia."

Brighton noted that she spoke, not in the drawling hill dialect of his host and hostess of the night before, but in the manner of one who is well educated. She repeated, "Why are you going to Troublesome?" in a way that drew a straightforward answer.

"All my life I've been a sort of mudhead," said Brighton, who felt that she was worthy of his trust, "and now I'm going to try hard to make a real man of myself."

He was determined, and the girl saw *it*. She dropped the rifle and put her other hand on his other arm much as though he had been her brother.

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"Promise me you won't breathe a word of this you've just seen, no matter what happens," she begged.

"Not a word," readily. "I promise most faithfully, Miss—you didn't tell me your name, you know."

A sudden smile made the pretty face seem doubly charming. It was plain that she believed he would keep his promise to her. To do what one says one will do—that is a religion in Tennessee's hills.

"Catherine Lane," she told him willingly; and he remembered that which the grizzled mountaineer had said of her. She continued; "Father calls me Cath, and Aunt Jess calls me Kate; others call me Kit, or Cat—but I hope you won't think I'm a cat! Come, Mr. Brighton; I'll show you the way over—though you could hardly miss it now. The camp is just beyond the hill, on the creek. Father and Aunt Jess and I live in the old home cabin near the other side of the camp clearing——"

She broke off, faced to the left, and went a little white. Brighton turned and saw the young man who had first lost the money satchel; he had left his horse, and had come back on foot to try to recover the money, which was the logging company's monthly pay-roll for its Troublesome Creek timberjacks.

"It's all right, Mr. Jameson," Catherine told the man from the company's Johnsville office. "We've got it. We—we took it from the robber."

Jameson advanced smilingly, took the satchel and thanked them. Did they recognize the highwayman? Catherine Lane said nothing, and Brighton declared that he had never set eyes on the fellow before, which was true. Yes, the robber had got away. They had done well, said Brighton to get the money back.

Jameson hurried toward his horse, and Catherine took up her rifle. Then Brighton set out on the upward-slanting trail with Catherine; and he noticed, he who was one to notice so few human things, that the young woman was unhappy for all her spirited conversation.

THEY halted when they had reached the hill's crest, and there Jameson passed them. Catherine stretched an arm toward the logging-camp on the creek below.

"One of those two big, rough-looking buildings in the center of the clearing serves as a boarding-house for the timberjacks," she explained, "the other has in it the company's commissary and supplies, and the superintendent's office. That little building is the smith's shop; and those big things on the near-by siding are a loader, a skidder, and a geared locomotive, which are undergoing repairs. Beyond it all you may see my own humble cabin home. I've always lived there, except when I was in a Johnsville school."

"Then you—er, you began life as one of the mountainfolk," quietly observed Brighton. "You've been to college?"

"No. But I'd like to go—oh, more than anything!"

"Why can't you go?" asked Brighton.

She answered simply—and sadly:

"Father hasn't the money."

The noonday meal was over when they reached the camp, and a score and a half of timberjacks, strapping fellows all, were lounging here and there on the long front porch of the rough, unpainted boarding-house. Brighton and Catherine were stared at almost as though they were inhabitants of another world. Then the burly, smoothly shaven fellow who had acted the part of the second robber in that which had taken place less than an hour before on the Johnsville trail went to his feet, took note of Brighton's white hands and whiter face, and laughed—

"Look at the molly man!"

Brighton winced and clenched his white hands. The five words were to him like so many bullets. A savage desire to fight struggled upward in his breast. Catherine touched his arm.

"Don't say anything," she whispered; and when they had passed the smiling timberjacks; "that's Basher Joe, the bully. You mustn't fight him—not now, anyway. Dad is the only man here that can whip him."

Brighton's eyes widened. So the second robber was Basher Joe McMackin, of whom he had already heard.

Another minute, and they had entered the superintendent's office in the commissary building. A huge man sat in there with his back to the door; he was bending over a scarred roll-top desk, on which lay a litter of time-cards with names and figures scrawled on them.

"Father," said Catherine, "get up and shake hands with Mr. Hartley Brighton of

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Philadelphia, who wants a job. Superintendent Tom Lane, Mr. Brighton."

Lane rose and turned toward them—and Hartley Brighton saw the strong, grave, black-bearded face of the corduroy-clad giant who had held up Jameson! No wonder Catherine had wanted him to go back to Philadelphia! He held himself together remarkably well, and wrung Lane's hand heartily. And from that moment, in spite of that which he knew against him, he liked Tom Lane.

"Ye must be hungry. Let's go and ax the cooky to rustle up some grub for ye; eh?" drawled the superintendent.

Unlike his daughter, he had not gone to school. It was with some difficulty that he wrote the names and dates and did the figuring on the time-cards. That which had won and kept for him his position at seventy-five dollars a month was his ability to handle men and his thorough knowledge of timber and logging.

Catherine gave the Philadelphian a smile and went homeward. Her father and Brighton went toward the boarding-house. As the two men reached the steps that led to the porch, Basher Joe McMackin advanced to meet them. There was the light of defiance, for the first time, in the bully's cold black eyes when they rested on the face of his superintendent.

Brighton understood even before the bully explained; McMackin now held a sharp sword over Tom Lane's head—if he liked, he could put Lane in the State penitentiary! What of himself? Brighton knew that it would be very easy for him to claim that he had only been trying to get the company's money back. Lane, no doubt, also knew it.

"It's time to go to work, boys," said Lane, and the lounging timberjacks rose obediently.

Basher Joe glanced toward Brighton, then looked back at Lane.

"I want a word wi' the both o' ye," he growled.

When only the three were left on the porch, McMackin took a step closer to the other two, and began in a low and menacing tone:

"I had a little talk wi' Jameson, who's now at dinner, when he paid us off. I onderstand everything now. Le's all turn our cyards face up. Now this molly man here, Tom, he seed you hold Jameson up, and he seed me try to git the comp'ny's money back safe. The molly man ain't to blame, Tom, and I ain't to blame. It's you that's to blame, Tom. When I seed you put a gun in yore pocket and sneak out the Johnsville trail, I guessed purty —— well what was in the air; so I puts a gun in my own pocket, and I follers ye. Ef I tell, Tom, I'll git yore job and you'll go to the pen. But I ain't agoin' to tell, long's you treat me right. I'd sudgest 'at ye makes me a foreman, Tom."

Brighton, angry as he was at being again and yet again sneeringly spoken of as a molly man, took note of the extreme pallor of Lane's countenance. Lane was cornered. He could think of no way out. He longed to beat Basher Joe within a hair's breath of his life, but he didn't dare.

"I'll make ye a foreman," he agreed reluctantly. "Go on to work, Basher. I'll treat ye right."

McMackin turned with a leering smile toward the Philadelphian.

"And I want ye to put the molly in my gang, Tom."

Brighton went as white as Tom Lane. McMackin held no sword over Brighton's head.

"Don't call me that any more, Basher," he said quickly and again he quivered in the grip of that spirit of something that was strange and daring and red.

"Why?" grinned McMackin. "What would ye do, ef I did, molly?"

Brighton struck first with his right, and followed it with his left. The first blow landed squarely on Basher Joe's mouth, and the second missed. With a growl of primitive and terrible rage, McMackin seized the Philadelphian's big, soft white body in his great arms and threw it crashing to the rough porch floor. It was over in less than two minutes. Brighton's features were blood-streaked and almost unrecognizable, while the bully had only a throbbing mouth. Brighton was not half a match for that huge brute of a man, Basher Joe.

Tom Lane separated them without himself incurring the wrath of McMackin, and led the Philadelphian to a wash-basin, and there the worsted man cleansed his face of its smears of blood. Then Brighton went, not into the boarding-house dining-room, but to the honeysuckle-covered cabin of the Lanes, for his noonday meal. And as he went, he muttered twice, through his bruised and swollen lips:

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"I'll keep fighting him until I whip him. From now on, the chief aim of my life is to whip Basher Joe. I want you to put me in his gang."

Lane said nothing. But admiration glowed in his sober eyes.

At table, the guest was carefully waited upon by both Catherine and her motherly aunt and the two women thoughtfully refrained from making any mention of the fight. When Brighton had eaten, Lane led him into the cabin's best room and closed the door.

"I've got somethin' I must tell you," said Lane, speaking in a low voice. "It's this here; I'm no common thief. I've allus gi' the best o' my life to my gyurl Cath. I don't only love her; I worship her, Brighton. And she's wo'th it. I'm proud o' her. She's all gold, pure gold. I saved my money and sent her to school in Johnsville ontel she gradyated thar. I'd saved enough more money outen my seventy-five bucks a month to give her a big start in college. I'd even quit tobacker so's I could save a little more.

"Then I was robbed o' the pay-roll money. The comp'ny used to send the money to me and have me pay the timberjacks; but sence I was robbed I wouldn't do it no more. It was plumb quare, how that money went. I was in my office, jest at dark, a-writin' names and figgers on the pay envelopes, with the money-satchel a-settin' on the floor at my feet. When I reached for the satchel, it was gone. It must ha' been took from the door or window with a wire. Next day the pres'dent o' the comp'ny come out, said it was keerlessness in me and talked about the law, and said I'd better make good the pay-roll. So I done it, and it took all I'd saved for Cath. I don't know who got the pay-roll, but—after that McMackin spent a good deal o' money.

"Lately I began to consider the comp'ny had took advantage o' my ign'rance o' the law, and so I held up Jameson at the p'int of a' hawnest blue gun. Now you know about the hold-up. Come wi' me; I want to show ye one reason why I done it."

He took Brighton's arm and led him across the log-walled room. They stopped before an old-fashioned photograph in a heavy frame. The picture was a likeness of a very pretty young woman, not much older than Catherine, and she had sweet, sad eyes that one remembered long.

"My wife," said big Tom Lane, choking in spite of himself. "Dead now. Died a month atter Cath was borned. Best woman God ever made, Brighton—and He's made some mighty good uns! Afore she went, she called me to her. I got down on my knees aside o' her bed. She knowed then she was a-goin' out.

" 'Tom,' she says to me, 'Tom, honey'—she says to me—'stand atween our baby Catherine and onhappiness as long as ye live on earth. Educate her, Tom, honey. Make her a fine lady. Ef ever it's necessary, steal for her, kill for her, die for her. I'm a-layin' down my life for her, Tom,' she says, 'you be ready to lay down yores.' And I promised."

He bent his great head and was silent for a moment. Then he looked up and put a heavy hand on Brighton's shoulder.

"Son," he said, with shining eyes, "you know the rest, and so I might as well tell ye this: Ef Basher carries this thing too far, he'll be killed from the laurels—and nobody won't know who done it. I'm afeard he'll be a-wantin' to marry my Cath; I'm afeard he'll put it up to me to make Cath marry him, or else go to the pen myself. I'll kill him afore I'll do either one. I've done stole for Cath, now I'm ready to kill for her. Brighton, I know who to trust. I'm a-trustin' you.

"Le's go to the commissary and outfit ye complete in loggers' clo'es. I'll stand for it."

Hartley Brighton felt bigger and better in the laced boots, corduroys, blue flannel shirt and broad-rimmed gray hat of a timberjack, and he looked bigger and better. On the following morning, he went to work in Basher Joe's woods gang.

NINE weeks passed. They were not without incident. Brighton had fought his foreman many times in those weeks, and each time he had taken a hard beating. He had fallen heels over head in love with Catherine, but he had been somehow afraid to declare himself, for Catherine was not like the other women he had known. As had been feared, Basher Joe had delivered this ultimatum: either Tom Lane's daughter must marry him or Tom Lane must spend a long term in the State prison for the crime of highway robbery.

Lane hated to kill. He fought for time in a hundred ways, and he did it well; still

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McMackin was not satisfied to wait. Had McMackin been as shrewd as he was brutally strong, he would have known that it was most unwise to press the cornered man further. Even a coward is a little more than dangerous. And Tom Lane was anything but a coward.

Came the afternoon of the first Sunday in September, and Hartley Brighton, clad in new timberjack clothing which did not include a coat, went down Troublesome Creek to meet Catherine Lane in a cool, fern-carpeted woodland dell. They feared to meet openly, because of Basher Joe and the sharp sword he held over the head of his superintendent. Catherine wore the neat-looking dress of pale blue and white she had worn when Brighton first saw her. She gave him her hand and smiled the glorious smile of a woman who is in love.

"Let's sit down, Hartley," she said—they called each other easily by their given names now—"and then I want you to tell me of the fight you had at the boarding-house dinner-table today. Ordinarily, you know, I dislike fighting; but in your case it's different. That's true courage, Hartley; to fight, and fight, when you know you're going to be whipped!"

They sat down among the fragrant, pale-green ferns, and Brighton put his broad-rimmed hat on the ground beside him.

"It began," he said, "in a very funny way. Basher stirred my coffee with his finger, and spoke of me again as a molly man. I lasted sixteen minutes this time. I've been staying with him a little longer, about one minute, each time. When I can stay with him half an hour, I'll have him, Cath! Your father, as you know, has been secretly coaching me in timberjack fighting tactics, and the woods work is making me strong and tough—look at this!"

He unbuttoned and pushed to his shoulder one of his blue shirt-sleeves, and crooked and straightened his bare arm. Catherine's brown eyes widened at the sight of his great muscles knotting and unknotting and rippling and slipping under the clear white skin.

"Wonderful!" she said admiringly. "Wonderful, Hartley! Some time you'll whip Basher, Hartley."

"Sure to do it, some time," Brighton agreed. He pulled down his sleeve and buttoned it. "Here's something that worries me. When I do whip him, Cath, will he tell what he knows about the hold-up to get even with me?"

"Father and I talked about that," murmured Catherine. "We soon came to the conclusion that your whipping Basher will not affect us at all—except to delight us. As long as Basher thinks there is the slightest chance of his getting me for a wife, he won't tell; when he knows that he can *not* have me for his wife, he *will* tell."

She went on, sadly:

"Hartley, I love my dad. Oh, God knows I love my dad! To save him from the penitentiary, I will marry that terrible, unspeakable brute of a man, Basher Joe—and I'll pretend I love him to keep my father from being too unhappy over it. But—you can't imagine, no matter how hard you try, how I hate the thought. It's bitter hell the very thought But, Hartley, Hartley, I love my dad. We Lanes we don't find it so difficult to put down our lives for one another."

To a Lane, tears were no sign of strength. Catherine bent her head to keep her companion from seeing the tears that streamed down her cheeks. But Brighton knew. He rose, knelt beside her, took both of her hands in one of his and pressed them to his breast.

"He sha'n't have you," declared Brighton, in tones that quivered and throbbed. "You're mine, Cath, and I'd kill him myself before——"

"Don't, Hartley," she interrupted reprovingly, lifting her face to his. "Don't even think of killing a man, but I want you to love me until I do marry him, and then—well, then you must go back to Philadelphia and forget."

Brighton put his free arm about her fine shoulders, drew her to him and kissed her. A silence fell between them.

Then Basher Joe McMackin stepped from the thick laurels into the open before them. He wore no coat, and his belt was tight; he was in fighting trim.

"Take yore hands offen her, molly!" he thundered. His black eyes flashed with a fierce anger.

Brighton rose and helped the trembling Catherine to her feet.

"Your temperature appears to be needlessly high, Basher," he said quietly. "In fact you seem more or less delirious. If you want to fight, wait until Miss Lane has gone."

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He turned to Catherine and bowed like a Chesterfield.

"Miss Lane, will you please leave us?"

His gray eyes commanded; Catherine hastened into the laurels and disappeared. Brighton looked at his watch, slipped it back into its pocket, and went toward Basher Joe McMackin, the champion timberjack fighter of all the Troublesome Creek logging-country.

It was a whirlwind fight, an indescribable fight. Catherine, hidden in the undergrowth, watched it almost without breathing. Minute after minute went by, and still they fought on like two male wild beasts, with fist and foot, tooth and nail, knee and elbow. But Brighton went down. A terrific blow near his left ear sent him reeling blindly, and he fell face foremost with one limp arm flung into the rippling waters of the creek. He was not unconscious, but he knew he was whipped for the time being, and he didn't try to get up.

And, since he didn't try to get up, Basher Joe laughed a queer, twisted laugh and went toward the camp.

When the bully had gone, Catherine crept from the laurels, knelt beside the inert body of the man she loved, shook him and called his name tearfully. Brighton turned over and sat up dizzily, smiling a smile that seemed ghastly because of the red smears that almost covered his face.

"Let's—let's see what time it is," he mumbled.

Catherine herself took out his watch.

"Ten minutes past three," she told him.

"Twenty minutes!" cried Brighton with new life. "Twenty blessed minutes I stayed with him that time! Do you get me, sweet little Cath? Twenty minutes!"

"And *he* went away staggering—I saw him!" jubilated Tom Lane's pure-gold daughter. "If——"

"If I hadn't let him bash me near the ear," cut in Brighton, "I believe I'd have whipped him. The next time, Cath, I'll get him!"

He knelt by the creek, washed his face and hands and dried them on his wide blue bandanna. Then he set out with Catherine for the camp.

His strength was not far from par when they reached the edge of the clearing. They separated there. Catherine turned homeward, and Brighton soon joined a group of timberjacks who were gathered around a newcomer, a heavy and florid, bald, elderly man in the clothing of the city, except that he had on a flannel shirt—and then Hartley Brighton recognized the uncle who had said that he was a mollycoddle and added that thin gruel, and not blood, ran in his veins!

"I've advertised for the rascal, and I've hired detectives," the old lumberman was saying, "and I've chased over a third of the United States myself——"

He caught sight of his nephew and went toward him with both arms outstretched. The two had almost met, when Basher Joe McMackin called out in tones that bit and rankled—

"Back to the nussery for yores, molly!"

Old George Brighton saw the marvelous change that came over his nephew's now sunburned face and stepped backward instantly. Young Brighton sprang like a panther toward McMackin and struck at the hateful, leering, stone-hard mouth. McMackin threw up both clenched hands and warded—and received a blow like the kick of a stallion at the bottom of his breastbone, a blow that expelled the air from his great chest with a hoarse, coughing sound and sent him staggering backward. A mighty shout went up from the throats of certain daring timberjacks who had come to admire Brighton and despise McMackin.

"Go to it, you Hart!"

And some yet more daring logger cried, loud and clear—

"Kill him dead, *you Basher Brighton!*"

They quickly formed a big ring about the fighting men, and coming toward that ring was white-faced, suffering Catherine; she had heard the cries of the timberjacks, and she knew what was on hand. McMackin was not long in recovering, and the movements of the two became so rapid that it was difficult for the onlookers to keep their eyes on their favorite. Blow after blow was landed, and soon the faces of both men were bleeding.

Brighton tried hard to keep his head, and succeeded. As coolly as though he had been merely playing a close game of chess, he brought into action all the timberjack fighting tactics that master fighter of them all, Tom Lane, had taught him; but McMackin was as tough as knots of wire cable, and there were times when it seemed almost useless to strike him, so quickly did he recover. Brighton confined his blows to tender places, and warded sledgehammer blows remarkably well.

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Through it all, old George Brighton stood with his right hand under his coat and on the butt of a short, big-bored revolver in a rear trousers pocket and wondered—and wondered—if that bloody-faced lion of a man was really his nephew Hartley!

TWENTY minutes of this, and young Brighton began to weaken. He was still handling himself finely, but his ability to take punishment was not so great as that of the more seasoned timberjack. Catherine, standing beside old George Brighton—whom she hadn't even seen, sobbed aloud as the man she loved pitched to the ground on his face, groggy, breathing in short gasps and bleeding from half a dozen places, and bade fair to stay down. Then it was that she surprised herself and every man of her hearers by crying spiritedly—

"He's pretty near whipped, Hartley—don't give up!"

He heard her voice, though he pretended that he didn't, and it goaded him. He raised himself to an elbow, and watched the blood drip from his nose and form a little pool on the grass; he was fighting for time now, for breath. McMackin, himself too far gone to crow his triumph, had dropped to his hands and knees and was watching his antagonist out of blackened, swollen eyes.

Brighton gathered himself, shot forward, seized McMackin's bull-like neck in the crook of one arm, whipped a hip under and threw McMackin over his head! And when McMackin tried to get up, Brighton knocked him down. Two minutes of this, and the erstwhile bully gurgled that he had had enough!

The other Troublesome Creek timberjacks went wild at that. They feared McMackin no more. The least man of them, they knew, could whip McMackin after that. They caught the victor to their shoulders, and split the quiet of that sunny Sabbath afternoon with cheers for—

"Basher Brighton!"

When they put the new champion down, he was so weak that he crumpled to his knees. It was Catherine who kept him from falling, Catherine who wiped the grime from his face and eyes and wept over him. The old lumberman, somewhat pale and nervous, still with his right hand under his coat, went up to Tom Lane and nudged him with an elbow.

"Say," he whispered, "that was some fight, wasn't it, eh? I didn't think he could do it —— if I did!"

McMackin had crept to the up-stairs of the near-by boarding-house. Suddenly he appeared at an open window, and he held a big, blued revolver in both his battered hands. When they saw him, he was trying to get a good aim downward at the top of the left shirt-pocket of the man who had whipped him fairly after a score of hard and unsuccessful battles. Tom Lane shouted something, but McMackin, his hands shaky and weak, went on trying for a good aim.

Then Lane and old Brighton whipped out revolvers and fired at the same time, and the would-be murderer dropped his blued weapon and sank backward—lifeless, and with only one bullet buried in his huge chest—so that nobody ever really knew who it was that killed him and thereby saved the life of Hartley Brighton and the happiness of the Lanes.

A little later, Hartley Brighton rose and confronted his kinsman smilingly.

"Is this thin gruel, Uncle George?" he laughed, pointing to his bruised and red-stained face.

"Not by a blamed sight, son!" growled Brighton the elder.

Young Brighton turned to Tom Lane's pure-gold daughter.

"Allow me to present my Uncle George Brighton, Cath." Then, "Uncle George, this is Miss Lane, my fiancée, and she's a regular jim-dandy of a girl!"

"As I have already seen," smiled the old lumberman, who went his length or else didn't go at all.

He took her quivering hands in his.

So the last hope of Catherine's dying young mother was fulfilled; Catherine went to Philadelphia, and became a very fine, very grand lady.

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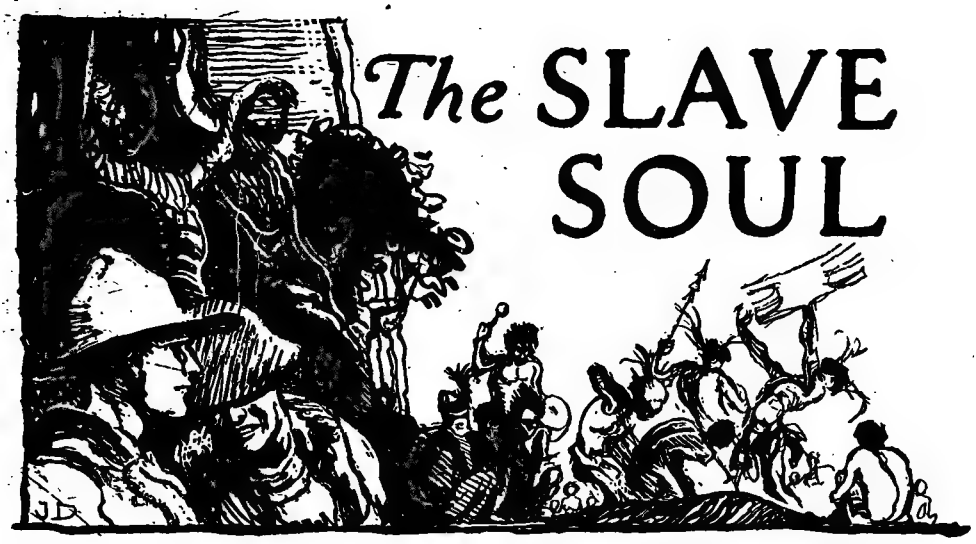

The SLAVE SOUL

By Frederick Simpich

Author of "An Arizona Lochinvar," and "Thanks to the Devil."

"LOCKE," growled Meyer. "This orgy may be mighty interesting to you—as an ethnologist; but I've seen all I want of it. As a peaceful naturalist, I'll stick to bugs and snakes." And he got up, threw away his *'dobe* cigaret, and went into their hut.

It was the Igorot feast of *Kafo-kab*, the war-dance that celebrates the taking of an enemy's head. Back in the jungle shadows, apart from this debauch of primitive men, Meyer and Locke had been sitting together before their hut, watching the wild scene with Anglo-Saxon disgust.

Black tropic night brooded thick and dark, obscuring the low straw huts of Bagnen, the Philippine mountain village. Before Chief Fu-nit's *ato* (hut) a camp-fire flared, and lit up the strange festival. On an upright bamboo pole a human head was stuck, and around it tatooed men were dancing, keeping step to the dull beat of copper gongs and the shrill nasal chant of scant-clad women squatting outside the fire-lit circle. It was like a scene staged from hell, with painted devils leaping in fire.

Wrinkled crones of the tribe muttered as they turned a rude spit, roasting a long round body—a body with paws and a tail that curled from the heat—curled tighter than ever its owner had curled it in life—curled till it snapped and fell off, and was taken from the coals and eaten by an old fretting woman!

"Better come inside," called Meyer again, "or you'll be seeing things tonight!"

"No nightmare can ever jar me, after seeing this one," answered Locke. "Besides, I had special orders to investigate this *Kafo-kab* feast, and tonight's my first chance." And he settled himself more comfortably, to see the dance through.

Washington had sent him among the Igorots to study their rites and habits, to photograph them, measure their skulls, toes, etc., and give Uncle Sam a full report on his adopted jungle children. By infinite tact, caution, and the aid of a letter from the American Governor at Baguio, Locke had eventually established himself with the wild hill tribe—in spite of old Chief Fu-nit's chronic dislike for all Americans. And now, after weeks at Bagnen *barrio*, having mastered much of the meager Igorot dialect, he had won even old Chief Fu-nit himself, by his big-bearded genial smile.

So it was that when Meyer, the little dried-up naturalist, had come nosing through the Luzon hills after nasty things that crawled, and hopped, or flew, Fu-nit had allowed Locke to share his hut with the wandering bug-man.

"Come on out, Meyer. You're missing

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the best part of the show!" insisted Locke, as he watched the savage revel reach the limit of hysterical abandon.

"Not me!" growled the naturalist, from under his mosquito-net inside the hut. "I'm not paid to write up Igorot society events."

The chanting women were leaping up now, and joining with the frenzied men in mad revel about the pole, with its grim trophy grinning in the firelight. The *gang-sa* beats grew faster, the fanatic dancers writhing and leaping, brandishing their spears at imaginary foes. Then in one shrill, shouting chorus of fury the savage finale was reached; the song ceased, the drumbeats ended suddenly, and exhausted men and women threw themselves panting to the earth.

From off the fire, still muttering fretfully, wrinkled hags lifted the long round thing with paws, now roasted brown.

Odors, savory odors, oddly like good roast beef, floated back to where Locke sat, and filtered into the hut and smelt appetizing to Meyer—who sat up in his bunk and sniffed.

Suddenly Locke slipped off his stool, and came groping hastily in through the low hut-door.

"Lie down, quick, Meyer!" he warned, throwing himself on his own bunk. "Snore! Pretend you're asleep—here comes that girl Pit-la, with a burnt offering!"

Both men lay quiet, feigning sleep.

Pit-la, the chief's daughter, paused outside the hut, calling "*Lock-ee! Lock-ee!*" in a soft timid voice. At last, getting no answer, she went away. Peeping out, the white men saw her gliding back to the silent feast, carrying a dog's leg. On their haunches about the fire the hill people squatted, tearing meat with their fingers and teeth, eating wolfishly.

"Well, old bug-hunter, this has been my lucky night! chuckled Locke, amiably, as he rolled off his bunk to undress. "I've been waiting weeks for this chance—I'm the first Bureau man who ever really *saw* the *Kafo-kab!* Two or three others have written it up, but only from hearsay. Tonight I saw it all, from start to finish. When my report gets back to Washington, the whole Bureau will have to sit up and take notice.

"And I hope you don't think it's ghoulish, Meyer, but this afternoon, when they brought in the—er—the head, you know, I happened to be there with my camera. By pretending to photograph little Pit-la, who's always a willing subject, I got three or four snaps of the procession. Got one good focus on the head itself, just as they put it up on the pole. It ought to make a good strong plate, when my report comes out in book form."

"'Strong' is a good word," croaked Meyer. "If the Government ever has the nerve to print such a picture, I'll have the Postmaster-General enjoined from carrying it through the mails! Some people shun me because I stuff toads and mudhens, and carry snakes in my suitcase—but they'll never catch me with pictures of decapitated human heads in my baggage!"

"You're prejudiced," laughed Locke, settling down in bed. "These people take heads as we take cups and other trophies, in golf and tennis. Old Fu-nit has over thirty skulls. One has been in his tribe a hundred years—they took it off the shoulders of a Spanish priest, according to monastery records in Manila."

"I've seen that one," admitted the naturalist, "and I've seen another one, too, that they're hiding from us. Saw it accidentally, and I think they keep it hidden for mighty good reasons. I mean to report it when we get back to Manila. It's a fine, shapely skull, and there's a gold crown on one of its front teeth!"

Locke was silent a moment.

"I saw it, Meyer—the girl showed it to me, when Fu-nit was out. Remember Rankin, the soldier that deserted and joined the insurrectos? Yes, back in '99. Well, he got up here, with his band of red-pantalooned hombres, and when the hill people tired of his deviltry they wiped out the whole bunch, Rankin among 'em. Washington heard all about it, but Rankin was a dangerous renegade, and officialdom overlooked the manner of his passing—secretly pleased, I imagine, that a bad man was removed without trouble or expense to the War Department."

"I see," mused Meyer, "but why keep his head? What's the idea back of this head-taking habit. When a man's good and dead, what's the use lugging in his grinning skull, and keeping it around the house, like a family heirloom?"

"Superstition—that's all."

"But *why?*" persisted Meyer.

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"Well, it's like this. The Igorots believe that if they kill a man, and bring in his head, it will make the dead man's soul their slave in the world to come."

"What rot!" snorted Meyer.

"They believe it, all right," yawned Locke, sleepily.

NEXT day Meyer went far into the hills, seeking the long-beaked *tick-lin*, or "soldier bird." It was sunset when he came down the mountain path, leading to Bagnen.

Emerging from a sharp turn, he came suddenly on Locke and Pit-la, old Fu-nit's strangely handsome daughter, seated on a rock beside the trail. It was not the first time, he reflected, that he had seen the two together—alone. And he was uneasy. He was old in the seductive East, this prowling naturalist. He had trapped parrots in Borneo when Locke was yet a boy in kilts; and he knew at a glance the first signs of "Japanese Fever," that undermining spell of the sensuous, unmoral Orient. And in Locke's case, at this moment, he suspected that symptoms were developing, and his friend's indiscretions troubled him.

Locke had not lost his moral grip, Meyer felt assured. Yet it would be easy for any man, months from white faces and standards, to like little Pit-la—like her immensely! Even Meyer himself, immune to the romance of South Sea flirtations, had more than once felt the charm of this magnetic wild girl, so unconsciously, so dangerously alluring.

Plainly, too, Pit-la adored Locke, adored him as a god from an unknown world; at a word from this white man, she was ready to abase and enslave herself. For Locke, the rosy path to Lotus Land loomed short and easy!

"It's a thankless job, always," reflected Meyer, as he came nearer the two, who had not yet seen him, "but I've got to caution that boy. He's treading mighty thin ice!"

And he clumped down the trail, purposely rattling loose stones.

"Pit-la's been giving me data on Igorot child life," Locke hastened to explain, jumping up and stooping again to grab at his fallen note-book. "You see, Meyer," he rambled on, in confusion, "she talks so well, and to make my report intelligent I must have facts, odd, interesting facts—she's a big help to me!"

"There'd be less distraction, getting your facts all from old Fu-nit, it seems to me," grumbled Meyer.

Together the two men strolled down the trail, into the *barrio*. Pit-la, sixteen, brown, shapely, clad in her girdle of dangling grass, followed behind, after the manner of women in Malay lands.

"It's not my business," Meyer went on, kindly, "but I'm older than you, Locke, and I've spent more years than I care to think of, rambling around among these wild tribes in Polynesia. And I've observed that a man from the outside world is perfectly safe here just as long as he ignores their women, and no longer. I remember once down in New Guinea——"

"Say, what are you hinting at, anyway?" asked Locke, boldly.

"You know what I mean," said Meyer calmly. "I noticed it the first day I came to the *barrio*, but I kept my own counsel, hoping you'd wake up and take a tumble. But instead of bracing up you're getting deeper into it, and I think the time's come to warn you about——"

"Now look here, old man!" exploded Locke, "I catch your drift all right, and you can stop right where you are! Pit-la's a little beauty, I admit, with something in her wild primitive personality that fascinates me. But she's innocent, too, in spite of her bare legs and childish intimacy! And right here, Meyer, to soothe your foolish fears, I'll tell you that I'm engaged to the finest girl on earth, back in God's own United States, and just as soon as I'm done with this beastly Igorot survey I'm off to Frisco to marry her. None of this '*dolce-far-niente*-Hear-the-East-a-callin' stuff for mine!"

"I know—I know—" and Meyer's voice came from him wearily—"but let me explain."

He was a frail, stooped man, thin-haired, his eyes squinted from the fierce glare of many tropic dry seasons, his tanned face seamed and wrinkled.

"The way of wild men with wild women is odd, down here under the Southern Cross. They don't play the game our way. Here, if a man looks twice at the same maid—and she smiles back—they're considered paired off for marriage by the rest of the tribe. Now you're at Fu-nit's hut every day, where this girl is. She washes your clothes, sweeps your hut, brings your vegetables, and tags

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you wherever you go. You mean no harm, of course, but you're breaking one of their oldest tribal customs. And you've got to stop right now; or pay the fiddler."

Locke was thinking pretty hard.

They had reached the edge of the *barrio*, and were passing the *Olag*, a big, thatched hut set apart as sleeping quarters for the unmarried girls of the tribe. It was dusk, and a noisy, giggling bevy of brown maids were already assembled, like chickens going to roost. A few of the bolder girls screamed good-natured taunts at Pit-la, and cast knowing glances at Locke. Pit-la darted past the Americans—a flash of fleet brown legs and flying grass—and ran off to her father's hut.

This *Olag* was a house of refuge for all Igorot girls, a sacred place into which no man might enter without his lady love's permission. To show her consent, the girl would seize her lover's pipe, his spear, or his knife, and run with it into the *Olag*. If he went to reclaim it, the pair became engaged; such was the law of the *Olag*.

IN THE week that followed, Meyer was absent from the village the whole of each day, after new specimens. He saw Locke only at night, when the ethnologist was working up his notes. In this same week a restless mood had been growing on Meyer. For the first time in his life his work bored him. There seemed room in his mind only for a vague presentiment, a sort of subtle intuition that trouble was brewing in Bagnen . . . That he and Locke ought to go. One morning, when this obsession lurked strongest, most persistently, he mentioned it to Locke. But the big man only laughed, and slapped his friend on the back, and told him that he needed a drink.

All that day Meyer idled about the hut, trying in vain to shake off the forebodings that haunted him. Locke was somewhere in the *barrio* taking pictures.

It was near evening when a sudden outcry, and uproar of shouts and excited voices, aroused Meyer and brought him out hurriedly. From the door of his hut he could see the *Olag*, and the sight before his eyes left him astounded, blinking incredulously.

Locke, camera in hand, was emerging from the *Olag*, Pit-la clinging to his arm, and a crowd of excited, gesticulating natives closing in about the pair!

In dismay, fearing he knew not what, Meyer started running toward the group about the *Olag*.

"What in—— have you done!" he gasped, gaining Locke's side in the jabbering throng.

"Guess I'm in for it, old man," came the answer gravely. "As I see it, they've deliberately trapped me. Pit-la grabbed my camera just now, and ran into the *Olag* with it. I knew about their fool 'Law-of-the-*Olag*,' of course, but I never thought they'd try to stick me with it! I'd been curious for weeks to see the inside of that forbidden place; and when old Fu-nit here, the crafty devil, told me to go in and get my camera, I went. Pit-la had hid it under her bunk. I got it, and came right out, the girl with me, and when we got out, here was the old man and the whole darned *barrio* at his heels. And now the old idiot wants to know when we're to have the marriage feast—says he wanted to get fruit and things, and—and—*dogs!*

"Meyer! They're crazy; all of 'em! I don't want this girl—my God! *Dogs!* Think of it!" And his rage grew stronger with every word.

Troubled, frightened by his angry voice, Pit-la had withdrawn from Locke's side, unnoticed by him, and moved nearer to her father. Critical as the moment was, and much as he feared for his friend's safety, Meyer was touched with pity for the girl. On her sweet young face grief was stamping its cruel marks; it was plain she had divined the truth.

No hint of the rage that must have seared his heathen soul showed in the wrinkled visage and sunken eyes of old Fu-nit. And when ugly muttering began among the crowd, and some of the young men made threatening gestures toward Locke, the chief called a few of them to him, and spoke in low tones. His secret word was passed along, and immediately the crowd melted away, the people going quietly to their huts. Turning his back on the white men, Fu-nit took his daughter gently by the hand, and led her away.

"You've made a bad mess, Locke," said Meyer, uneasily when they were left alone, "but we've got to fix it, somehow, *muy pronto*, and then get out of here—if we can!"

Locke demurred, obstinately.

"I've played square here, Meyer, and my work's not done. We've got our guns," he

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argued, "and there's not another firearm in the *barrio*. We'll stick, old scout, and shoot up the brown devils if we have to!"

"Yes, shoot 'em up! Then what?" mocked Meyer. "What chance, with Benguet's hills swarming with these short-legged heathens! Our skulls would be boiled and hung up to dry before sundown tomorrow if we started a fight here in the *barrio*. Maybe you can write a book on head-hunters, but you don't know half their hellish ingenuity—nor how far their fool superstitions can drive them! We've got just one chance to keep our heads on our shoulders, and get out of this."

"Well, don't be stingy with your advice! Blaze away!" fretted Locke.

"Come to the hut and get your .44. Hang it on, in plain sight, and walk right over to Fu-nit's *ato* and bluff him out. Tell him he misunderstood you, that you went into the *Olag*, as you thought with his permission, without regard for their fool savage laws. To clinch it tell him we're leaving tonight for Baguio, and that you're going back to our tribe to marry a girl of your own kind. I'll bring my gun, and see you through."

Meyer in the lead, they stalked briskly back to their hut, and secured their automatics. Then, boldly emerging, they made for Fu-nit's big *ato*. From dark grass huts curious faces peered out. There was something ominous in the sullen quiet of the mountain village.

"I got you into this, Meyer," said Locke apologetically. "It's all my fault; but I swear I never intentionally——"

"Of course you didn't!" interrupted Meyer, "but as I said once before, flirting is a fine art that hasn't reached the wild people."

They had arrived now, in front of the old Chief's hut.

"Now get in there," ordered Meyer, "and give it to him straight. We'll try to get out of here before dark. It's a long hike to Baguio!"

LOCKE entered the big *ato*, where skulls grinned down and a savage chief was comforting his daughter. Crouched on the ground at her father's feet she did not look up as Locke came in; she seemed not to hear his weak, lame speech.

Fu-nit took it impassively. He understood—in his Igorot way. A white, a hated *Americano*, had come among them recommended by the powerful *Gobernador*. He had won the tribe's friendship, and the precious heart of Pit-la, pride of the Benguet hills. He had entered the sacred *Olag* with the girl, making her his wife by the ancient law of her people. Now he would desert her, go back to a woman of his own accursed kind, after the manner of other stray whites Fu-nit had heard of.

"Lum-a-wig, god of the hill folk, will show my daughter the path to peace," droned the old chief, solemnly, when Locke had spoken.

Pit-la had risen now, her splendidly molded shoulders thrown back, her breasts heaving, her shapely arms pressed closely to her sides—like a trained soldier at attention. But there smoldered in her fierce brown eyes a light that was new to Locke.

"Fu-nit has spoken," muttered the chief, in his odd, clicking voice. "The white may go!"

At heart Locke was just and generous. He saw bitterly now the depths of his folly, the irreparable wrong he had done this girl. Loath to leave her forever without some word of farewell, impulsively he thrust out his hand, the hand she had loved to fondle in the happy foolish past.

But the girl seemed not to see him. Her eyes met his but they were eyes that saw not. Her face, stony and inscrutable, was the sinister face of the Sphinx, the composite face of ages of savage ancestors. The girl might have been dead, so rigid and motionless she was, but for the faint hiss of her quick breath.

"Come out, fool!" groaned Meyer, at the door; Locke, unnerved, fled from the *ato*.

Hurriedly they packed their blankets, and a little food. Cherished specimens, notes, plates, the work of months, were all abandoned. Carrying their own packs, as no white man had done before in all Benguet, they quit the *barrio*. From darkening huts unfriendly eyes peered out.

Down the rough, steep, winding trail they hastened, silently, tensely alert. Turning a sharp bend, Meyer glanced back. On the hill crest, high above them, stood Pit-la, outlined against the evening sky, slim, clean cut, like Diana.

But Locke would not look back.

The air was hot and still; in the mountains near them a thunder-storm was brewing. As the men trudged on mosquitoes

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came, as they do when rain is near, and bit their hands and faces till they stung and were bloody. When it was quite dark they rested a little, and drank water from a hillside spring that Meyer knew. But Locke was nervous, and quickly they pushed on, blindly, stumbling now over unfamiliar paths.

Then the rain came, suddenly, in prodigious drops—as rain falls in tropic isles—and on the dark, narrow trail, full of sharp turns and slippery, they could walk no longer. So they turned aside, into a tiny glade, spread their water-proof blankets and lay down. Quickly as it had come the rain ceased, and the moon shone for an instant, sparkling on dripping green things, and then slid behind towering cliffs.

They would rest till dawn, they agreed, and then press on.

Meyer, exhausted, succumbed to sleep. But for a long while Locke lay awake, starting nervously when water dripped, or night birds called. Unseen things seemed to rustle in the thick bushes, hanging over the cliffs above them. He was afraid.

Once in the night Meyer awoke, startled, with the feeling that something soft, like a tender hand, had passed gently across his upturned face. He could have sworn that some one had touched him—the impression had been so real, so natural! He sat up. It was quite dark, and he could see nothing; he put out his hand, and touched Locke's blanket, where it covered his big, warm shoulders.

A sound came from under the blanket, a strong, gurgling sigh, like a big man snoring, and Meyer lay down again. Far back the winding trail a soldier-bird called, ever so faintly. It seemed odd, Meyer mused sleepily, that this bird should call thus at dead of night; he had never heard one call before, except at dawn.

It was broad day when Meyer awoke; already the distant peaks were tipped with golden light. Yawning deliberately, he stretched his lean arms above his head, drawing in a deep chestful of tonic mountain air. Then he rolled from his blanket, stiffly, and stood erect. He yawned again, and called cheerfully to Locke, still under the blanket.

When no answer came he stooped down, to shake his friend's big shoulders. But even as he stooped, he recoiled hastily, trembling with horror—weak, sick. Pressed lightly in the wet clay, close to Locke's body, was the shapely imprint of a girl's bare foot!

Dreading what he knew he would see, Meyer screwed up his courage—and threw back the blanket.

Pit-la had claimed Locke's soul!

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PRECEDENTS in PIPEROCK

By W. C. Tuttle

Author of "A Bull Movement in Yellow Horse," "Honest to Doughgod," etc.

NEVER heard of such uh thing! Never heard of such uh thing!" squeaks "Scenery" Sims, poundin' on the table so hard he spills several stacks uh chips.

Take uh half portion of uh man, squeeze his face out uh shape, and give him uh voice like uh bull fiddle with the asthmy and yuh got Scenery Sims.

"Safe and sane, eh?" he howls. "Why, dad bust it, fellers, our glorious forefathers never played things thataway! Way back in 1492, on that glorious day when George Washington said; "Give me liberty or don't give me nothin'," they didn't——"

"You got yore dates mixed, Scenery," opines "Mighty" Jones. "George Washington never was in the Civil War. Yore thinkin' of the days uh forty-nine. If we wants uh safe and sane Fourth uh July in Piperock, I reckon what George Washington said ain't goin' to prevent us. Them fellers was out uh date, Scenery. I'll leave it to Magpie Simpkins if things ain't changed uh lot."

"How do I know?" asks Magpie Simpkins, sheriff uh Yaller Rock County. "I reckon they has, Mighty, but if they ain't, what's the difference? The Constitution uh the United States and the lee-gality uh human interests gives us the right to celebrate uh holiday as we sees fit. If we desire to pass the Fourth without havin' to wear crape or take up collections the next day there ain't nobody goin' to say us nay."

"It ain't right." Scenery shakes his head, sad-like, and gazes at the few drops uh hooch still left in his glass. "Here I been figgerin' on uh blowout, and now yuh opines to deprive me of it. I ain't the only one, Magpie. Dog-gone, I reckon most every puncher in the country will feel the same way. Safe and sane——!"

"She ain't goin' to be no Quaker meetin' at that," states "Buck" Masterson, wipin' off the bar with his sleeve. "There's that baseball game between the Triangle and the Seven-A, uh patriotic speech by Judge Steele and somethin' else."

"What do yuh mean by 'Somethin' else?' Buck?" asks "Dirty Shirt" Jones, neglectin' his game uh solitaire long enough to git inquisitive. "Is it uh surprise or are yuh ashamed to name it?"

"She's uh surprise, Dirty. Ain't she somethin' to look forward to, Magpie?"

"She shore is. Somethin' what ain't never been seen here before. Me and Buck bein' members of the entertainment committee don't have to tell all we knows. I can say, though, that it's goin' to shoot that five-hundred roll we collected. We opines that yuh shore got to pay fer high-class stuff, eh, Buck?"

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"That's whatever, Magpie. Also, that ball game ain't goin' to be no slouch, fellers. Yuh can give credit to Johnny Myers and Weinie Lopp fer that. They brings the idea back from Chicago, where they went with that train load uh Triangle cows. They went to see uh game there and——"

"Puts misery in my soul," finishes "Swede" Johnson, the scantlin'-shaped foreman of the Seven-A outfit. "The Seven-A ain't done uh tap uh work since them fellers got back. I tries to git uh li'l work done but they won't even put uh saddle on uh bronc. I threatens to tie uh can on some uh them cow-chasers, and Hank Padden orates that I either learns the game or he'll find uh foreman what will. Hank's crazier'n uh loon. Look at my hands. I'm learnin'."

"I reckon she's uh grand feelin' if yuh don't weaken," laughs Magpie. "We'll have uh li'l dance in the evenin', which will round out uh real pleasant holiday. This here business uh shootin' off dinnamite in the main street ain't sane uh-tall. Gittin' stewed and shootin' yore neighbors ain't no way to show patriotism. Killin' uh feller mortal is murder, even if yuh do it in fun, unless he's tryin' to kill you first. Safe and sane—that's the idea. Be patriotic, fellers—not loco. Let's pass the day and be able to git up the next mornin' without havin' to plant somebody."

"Them sentiments is fine as frog-hair, Magpie," agrees Dirty Shirt. "To hear you talk uh feller'd be plumb willin' to set in uh hammick all day and sip milk. You, bein' the sheriff uh this split-hoof community, probably argues to yoreself that uh safe and sane holiday saves labor fer you. Is Ike Harper partial to this celebration?"

"Ike is," sez I. "Last Fourth I almost gits my earthly envelope split up the middle with dinnamite, and now and evermore I'm uh disciple uh quietude and soft e-motions. Me fer uh soft spot on the greensward while I tunes my ear to nothin' more audible than to hear ol' Judge Steele orate, "When in the course uh human events it becomes necessary fer——"

"He ain't goin' to orate them lines is he?" snorts Mighty Jones. "Them ol' speeches is out uh date, and uh heap dangerous. Remember last Fourth in Paradise? Ol' "Calamity" Kelly reads that out of uh paper to the multitude, and he gits so het up over it that he tears into "English" George over in Chaffin's saloon, and we has uh pair uh invalids on our hands until snow flies. English George is uh Swede, but dang his hide, he don't care what country he fights fer. If the judge is goin' to orate them words we better be shore and keep everybody sober."

"Speakin' of this here baseball thing," sez Scenery, weary-like, "is there any chance to win or lose uh li'l money? If I can't be noisy I'll be sporty."

"The Seven-A will cover uh li'l," states Swede. "I been hit on the nose, slammed in the ribs, and got blisters on my hands. If sufferin' causes uh good baseball nine I reckon the Seven-A will have the world's champions by that time."

"Jist how is she played and what does she re-semble, Swede?" asks Mighty. "I ain't never seen uh game of it."

"You ain't no oddity," consoles Magpie. "Weinie and Johnny is the only ones what have, so we got to take their word."

"Yuh use uh ball and uh bat," states Swede. "There's three bases and uh home. Yuh can't tally uh run till yuh git home. Sabe?"

"Lucid and not elaborate," sez I. "Jist tally one fer me in about five minutes. Whenever anybody goes into statistics thataway it wearies me and I must seek solitude. I allus did detest uh feller what outlines everything thataway, and if you Jaspers can git along without me I'll go home and put uh pack on my hoss."

I GITS my outfit and leaves Piperock. This here safe and sane idea was started by Magpie Simpkins, and she seems to find fertile ground in the minds uh most of our prominent citizens. I ain't crazy about it. Piperock allus has been uh hy-iu place on the Fourth uh July. She's been uh place where uh timid man hadn't ought to be on that glorious occasion unless he's imbibed enough hooch to make him scare-proof. She's uh hellwinder from the cinch both ways. I shakes my head as I tops the ridge and looks back.

"The world shore does change," sez I to my pack animile. "That used to be uh man's town, but they're tryin' to put it on uh milk diet. Pretty soon they'll arrest uh man down there fer dreamin' that he's packin' uh gun. She won't be no more inhabitable than Boston. Well, gol blast it, uh mon don't have to live there unless he wants to, so what's the use uh talkin'."

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I pilgrims way back in the Sawtooth ountains to do assessment work on uh l claim that me and Magpie owns, and it's e third uh July when I tops that ridge 'in and sees Piperock.

She shore is dressed up. They got flags ickin' around most every place, and the ont uh Buck's place is draped with red, hite and blue. Th' ol' town shore looks ood after two weeks uh solitude and hard ck drillin'.

I winds down to the bottom of the hill. s we hits the bottom my ridin' bronc shies ide and my pack animile sways back on ie rope so hard that Ike Harper sets down ard on the earth. Both broncs hurries omeward.

"Shafe and shane," mumbles uh voice ehind me. "An-tishep-tic."

I rolls over and looks back. There sets cenery Sims and Dirty Shirt Jones. hey're in the shade of uh mesquite, and hen I looks around Scenery shakes up uh ottle uh hooch till she foams. They both ods wise-like at me and takes uh drink. cenery takes the bottle away from Dirty, nd weaves over to me.

"Ike," sez he, "are you or are yuh not? nshwer to the bes' uh yore ability."

"Am I or am I not what?" I asks.

"In favor uh me and Schenery and glori- us freedom or in favor uh shafe and shane. Me and Schenery we formed 'fensive alli- n'sh. Sabe? Wan' to jine, Ike? We're roselytes, eh, Dirty?"

"Ol' Wesht goin' to the dogs," wails Dirty, ipin' tears out of his eyes. "Needs eshurectin', Ike. Needs it bad—bad!"

"Yesshir," agrees Scenery, at the top uh his squeaky voice, wavin' the bottle around his head. "She shore needs uh pill. Me and Dirty is goin'——"

"Don' drop the bottle!" wails Dirty, but he sends out his warnin' too danged late.

Scenery gits too elastic in the body, and sprawls on the ground and the bottle breaks its spine on uh rock. Scenery sighs deep-like and welcomes slumber.

"There yuh are!" groans Dirty. "Only man on earth what'll keep me comp'ny on National birthday, and now he's gone to schleep on the job. Piperock's too sanitary, Ike. Baseball, schpeeches and b'loon. Who'n —— wants b'loon. Whole day an' night ahead and only six quarts lef'. Look fer drouth this sheason. Goin' t' have b'loon an'—Scenery, yore uh pore ol'—— uh—uh hum." Dirty retires.

I rolls 'em both into the shade, and kicks Dirty on that part uh the anatomy which was built fer that purpose.

"Dirty!" I yells. "What was that thing yuh mentioned? What's uh b'loon?"

"Fool'sh," mumbles Dirty. "Goin' up in b'loon. Da' fool!"

I leads myself up to our cabin, and finds Magpie settin' on the steps. He's got all the skin peeled off his nose, one eye is puffed up some bad, and he's rubbin' hoss-liniment on his hands.

I sets down beside him, and watches the operation.

"Hello, Ike," sez he, after a while. "How does she look?"

"Worst I ever seen," I states. "Who yuh been arguin' with?"

"I ain't speakin' uh my appearance," he snaps, throwin' the empty bottle out into the yard. "I'm askin' about the mine."

"Magpie, if I had a face like you got I wouldn't give uh second thought to the best mine on earth. Where'd yuh annex it?"

"I was the ketcher today, Ike."

"Evident," I agrees heartily. "You shore were. I don't reckon that anythin' got past yuh, ol'-timer. I'd designate that yore uh stopper, also."

"Ike." Magpie pronounces my name like it was sacred. "Ike, yo're ignorant. Jist plumb ignorant. Uh ketcher is an accessory to uh baseball nine."

"To look at yore face and then make uh guess I'd opine that you been accessory to uh murder. If that's the way she acts I'm in favor uh capital punishment fer baseball. Say, Magpie, when I comes in I finds Scenery Sims and Dirty Shirt out east uh town in the mesquite. All they got left to drink is six quarts uh hooch."

"Pitiful," agrees Magpie. "But then, maybe they can sober up enough to walk in after more."

"Dirty orates somethin' about uh b'loon, Magpie. What did he mean?"

"Balloon ascension, Ike." Magpie fergits his sore spots, and gits some excited. "That's shore goin' to be some stunt. It cost us five hundred, Ike. This here balloon feller was over in Helena, and we hire him to come over here and show off on the Fourth. He goes way up yonder in the air, Ike, and then cuts loose with nothin' between him and the dust but uh riggin'

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what looks like uh umbreller without no spine. He's nervy."

"How's the baseball game comin' on?" I asks.

"Huh!" Magpie looks at his blistered hands, and rubs his fingers light-like over his peeled nose. "I reckon she's doin' nicely, Ike. Yuh see, they didn't have enough players at the Seven-A, so I volunteers my services. I wish now that I'd kept my blamed face shut."

"Must be uh right lovely pastime," I opines.

"Great sport," agrees Magpie. "Yuh see it's this away, Ike; uh baseball nine consists uh nine——"

"Don't apologize, Magpie. Go right ahead and git hurt. Don't try to make me an authority on the thing. How's the safe and sane idea comin'?"

"Fine! It shore has the ol' order uh things beat four ways from the jack. We aims to jist loaf durin' the forenoon. Long about one o'clock Judge Steele will mount the platform and orate the Declaration of Independence, and uh few well chosen words. Then ol' Bill Thatcher's or-kestra will render uh few airs. Then comes the balloon ascension. Immediately follerin' that will come the baseball game between the Seven-A and the Triangle outfits. In the cool uh the evenin' we'll shake uh hoof in the Mint Hall. Ain't that uh lot better'n blowin' up the town and killin' folks, Ike?"

"Anythin's better'n murder, Magpie. Scenery and Dirty shore must be uh bloodthirsty pair to object."

"Them two pelicans is blots on the earth," orates Magpie. "They comes out yesterday to see us practise. Dirty makes uh bet with Scenery that he can shoot and hit the baseball when somebody bats it out. Uh course nobody knows about it until Dirty's gun explodes, and Pete Gonyer's new sombrero gits ventilated. Pete's sore as uh boil, and he opines to slap Dirty to uh peak as soon as the Fourth is over.

"Scenery steals uh strip uh buntin' from in front uh Wick Smith's store and ties it to the tail uh Sam Holt's ol' milk cow. They finds the buntin' over on the east bank of the Li'l Muddy, and that cow's tracks is pointin' towards Philadelphia. What yuh goin' to do with uh pair like that?"

"Well," sez I, "yuh can't reform everybody, Magpie. Yuh might assess 'em double fer the amusements, cause they'll see double. In order to foller out the general scheme uh things I suppose that Buck will close his place all day, eh?"

"No-o-o. Yuh see, it's jist as you said, Ike. Yuh can't re-form everythin' to once. Anyway, safe and sane don't mean arid. I'm uh li'l worried about this baseball thing, though. I reckon everybody except you has got uh bet on it. We're goin' to beat the tar out uh them Triangle cow-chasers, Ike, so I'd advise yuh to place uh li'l money on it."

I never bets on uh sure thing thataway. The Harper tribe don't wish to take any man's money without givin' him uh run fer it so I don't bet on the game. I'm sort uh interested to see how the safe and sane idea is goin' to pan out, but I can't seem to censure Dirty and Scenery fer their attitude.

THE next mornin', contrary to usual customs, passes without no casualties. Dirty and Scenery comes in town, gives three cheers fer each other and then goes to sleep under the speaker's platform.

I meets ol' Judge Steele, and he's dressed up like uh plush hoss in his swallertailed coat and hard hat. Also, he's got his whiskers curried until they stands out like uh Rooshian's.

"Ike," sez he, indicatin' under the platform, "It's uh howlin' shame fer uh bright and shinin' community like this to have to harbor uh pair uh disgraces like that. They toil not, neither do they spin."

"Jedge," sez I, pattin' the ol' boy on the shoulder, "no matter how black the cloud may be there is still uh chance that it has uh silver linin'; maybe they'll be drunk or asleep most of the time."

I buys the Judge uh brace uh drinks, and he gives me sort of uh special performance. When the Judge orates with uh few jolts under his belt he favors uh windmill uh heap. While I don't care fer the words I'm charmed with the music. He shore can slide his voice from uh mockin' bird tenor to down in uh well with wooden teeth.

I pilgrims out to the lot where the balloon-feller is sewin' up his utensil, and I finds most uh Piperock out there. There's more kids and dogs out there than I ever thought existed. The balloon-person is sort of uh runty lookin' animile, with squirrel teeth and squinty eyes. He smokes

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garets what smell like uh Bohunk's whisk-s was on fire, and acts as cocky as uh ine-squirrel full uh nuts.

Findin' that there ain't nothin' in watch-i' uh feller sew canvas that gives me uh atriotic thrill I wanders back to Buck's lace and horns into uh poker game. I on't go broke until it's time fer the speak-i'. When I goes out there's uh crowd round the platform, and the judge is settin' p there in lonesome majesty, with uh tall itcher uh water and uh glass at his elbow.

The or-kestra busts loose about that time nd everybody cheers except me. I'm too ober to appreciate "Sweet Marie" layed in march time on uh bass drum, anjo, guitar and uh bull fiddle. There ain't othin' to stir yore pulses in that piece. f uh man had to go to battle to music ke that he'd shore kill the band first.

Everybody congratulates the orkestra—xcept me, and then we turns to the speech-aker.

Hank Padden climbs up on the stand and akes off his hat. I can see that Hank's rganized.

"Ladies and gentlemen," sez Hank, "it s my duty on this pleasant occasion to ave the pleasure on this here occasion—o have the pleasure to do my duty on his——"

"Git back and take uh fresh start, Hank," advises Dirty Shirt, in uh loud oice, from under the stand. Everybody niggers, and Hank gits purple behind the gills. He shifts his gun around to the front nd clears his throat.

"Ladies and gentlemen—all except one," egins Hank, ag'in, but the voice uh Scenery Sims squeaks from the other end of the platform:

"Don't slander yoreself thataway, Hank. Keep yore mouth shut and people what don't know yuh won't know that you ain't uh gentlemen."

Hank walks to the edge and peers under, but Scenery is out uh sight, and Hank proceeds:

"It is my duty on this solemn occasion to have the pleasure of introducin' to you uh man who is knowed far and wide as uh—uh—uh——"

"Tell the truth, Hank," advises Dirty Shirt. "No matter how painful it may be to the judge, tell the truth."

"Is the sheriff within call?" asks Hank, lookin' us over.

"In whisperin' distance, Hank," replies Magpie.

"I'd applaud yore efforts if you'd put them two hombres in jail," states Hank. "It'll save uh killin'."

"What'll I charge 'em with, Judge?" asks Magpie.

The judge takes another drink out uh that pitcher, and wipes his whiskers careful like. He's done took seven drinks since he sets down up there, and I marvels exceedin'ly. As uh rule the judge only admires water as an excuse fer buildin' uh bridge.

"Sheriff," sez he, solemn like, "thish is exceedin'ly hard matter to adjudicate. Better warn 'em, Sheriff. Tell 'em 'f they do it ag'in we 'dopt stern measures. Sabe? Go on, Hank."

The judge re-lapses in his chair and takes another drink uh water.

"As I was sayin'," begins Hank, ag'in, "I'm up here to introduce to you uh man who is knowed far and wide as uh square dealer and——"

The judge grins foolish like, and heaves hisself up in front uh Hank, spoilin' his oration. He leans over and shakes hands, solemn like, with Swede Johnson and Weinie Lopp, and then puts his hard hat on the back of his head.

"I'm much obliged to Hank fer his compliments and well wishes," sez he. "While it ain't no more'n I deserve I'd just like to say——"

"Bing! Bing! Bing!"

Somebody is punctuatin' the judge's remarks with uh six-gun, but they ain't close at hand. As near as we can figger it's over near the balloon corral.

"I'd almost make uh bet it's Dirty and Scenery," states Magpie. "I reckon I'd better see what they're doin'."

The judge listens uh while with the crowd, and then imbibes another drink uh water. He shore relishes that water. Hank casually sniffs at the water, and fans hisself with his hat. Pretty soon he gits dry and takes uh glass full. The judge leans ag'in the railin' and borrows uh cigaret from Pete Gonyer.

"Hadn't yuh better go on with yore oration, Judge?" asks Pete. "It's gittin' late."

The judge straightens up, puts his left hand inside his vest and clears his throat:

"When in the course uh human e-vents it becomes necessary fer one person to——"

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"Hey!" yells uh voice from the edge of the crowd. "The balloon's about to rise!"

The kid who does the yellin' worms his way to the platform and pants out:

"Dirty Shirt and Scenery went over where the feller was gittin' his balloon ready, and they shot holes in his kerosene cans. That's all the kerosene he's got so he's usin' up what's left right now. Somebody better hurry 'cause there ain't nobody to help him except Dirty and Scenery.'

"While the information is unpleasant it ain't vital," states the judge. "My oration comes first, and in spite uh Dirty Shirt Jones and Scenery Sims I'm goin' to——"

"Look out!" yells Ricky Henderson, who was sort uh hangin' onto the railin' of the platform. He grabs his hat and gallops out of the main herd. The crowd takes uh look and follers suit.

It's the balloon. She don't seem to act accordin' to plans and specifications, and uh second look tells us why. Up the street she comes, jist barely off the ground, and behind her comes Dirty Shirt on his bronc. That bronc is what's keepin' the balloon from performin' her natcheral intentions, fer the reason that from the balloon run uh rope which is snubbed to the saddle horn.

Behind the leaders comes the li'l balloon person and behind him trails the risin' population uh Piperock and their dogs.

We dodges to places uh safety, and watches the rag cyclone. The wind is sendin' her along like uh tumble-weed, and from her rear end comes uh trail uh black smoke. There is times when Dirty and his mount is plumb off the ground, and jist when they're about to hit the speaker's platform the cinch busts. The bronc spills on his head in the street, but Dirty and the saddle comes right on. Jist as they hits the platform, the saddle flips under and over the railin' and Dirty tangles with the judge and Hank Padden.

Comes uh rip and uh whoop, and the platform, Hank Padden, Judge Steele and Dirty embarks on uh voyage.

Bein' foolish is uh trait of the Harper tribe. Somehow I figgered that I was man enough to stop that craft, so out I goes and grabs uh rope. I immeediate and soon finds that I'm jist uh passenger on the thing, too.

Up the street we goes on our merry way, bumpin' and splinterin' and cussin' in uh cloud uh dirty smellin' smoke. I gits uh glimpse of that tree in front uh Sam Holt's place, as I peers through the smoke. We're headin' straight fer it and before I has time to hop off, comes uh sickenin' thud, and Ike Harper don't remember nothin' except uh sweet odor and uh splashed feelin'.

I WAKES up fully rested, and finds Scenery Sims settin' beside me. He's all alone beside me, and he's holdin' the remnants of uh glass pitcher in his hand. When he sees me set up he slaps hisself on the leg and whoops:

"By cripes! I win! They all said yuh was dead, Ike, and I makes uh five-dollar bet with Dirty that yuh wasn't. I stayed to see if yuh was, and also to see that Dirty didn't come back to try and cinch the bet."

"What was it, Scenery?" I asks, havin' forgot the reason fer my alleged demise.

"Gin!" snorts Scenery, smellin' of the pitcher. "Jist plain gin, and I thought it was water! No wonder the judge licked it up."

It all sort uh comes back to me, and I looks around.

"You was out fer some time Ike," states Scenery. "Everybody has gone to the ball game but you and me. I don't reckon the balloon was hurt any. The judge split his swaller-tailed coat and tore the rim off his hard hat. Outside uh them few minor incidents I reckon it was uh success. How yuh feelin', Ike?"

"Tolable," I states. "I reckon we might as well go and see the ball game, Scenery. Did you place any bets on it?"

"Uh-huh. Me and Dirty both unhooks with our roll but I'll be uh liar if I knows which team we favors. Mebby somebody knows."

We goes down to Buck's place but she's deserted. Not uh soul in sight. Dirty Shirt is settin' there on the bar, but he don't count. He ain't got no soul.

"Ike," sez he, "that was one gran' aschenshun, eh?"

"You ought to be lynched!" I states. "You busted up the Declaration of Independence."

"Have uh drink on the house," grins Dirty. "Me and Scenery's busted Cons'tution of United States, Ten Com'-andments and Declaration 'f Independence. Reckon we better make perfect score and busht our danged necks, eh, Scenery?"

Dirty rests his head on his hands and goes to sleep.

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'Disgrashful!" wheezes Scenery. "Worsht ırth I ever had. I got inshomnia l Dirty's got sleepin' sickness. Fine r! All thish worl' 's sad an' dreary :rywhere I—hum-m——"

. takes their six-guns and hocks 'em to ck fer uh quart uh hooch. The fact ıt Buck ain't there don't bother me none. ɔuts the guns under the bar, and takes bottle. Fair enough. I finds the lloon feller still on the job. He's got his smoke-bag down at the same place, and 's settin' there on uh rock, lookin' like jury had jist said; "Guilty." He im-ɔes about the full of uh mewl's ear out my bottle and sighs deep-like.

"Makes things look brighter?" I asks, t he shakes his head.

"It can't be done," sez he, wipin' uh tear his long nose. "They asks more'n mortal ın can do."

"Knowledge comes before sympathy," orates, and he explains:

"Them fellers won't pay me that five ındred dollars. They opines that I con-ıcts to fly and that I ain't never flew. hey states that the feller on the hoss is ıtitled to it because he got plumb off the ound. If it hadn't been fer him I'd uh ɔen all right. When the bag begin to pull s hoss got scared and—well, you saw what ıppened."

"Yes," sez I, "I saw, felt, heard and nelled it. Can't yuh fix her up so she'll y ag'in?"

"Mebby if I had help. I got almost ıough kerosene to fill her ag'in. If I ɔn't land this money I got to walk out. y the time that ball game is over it'll e dark, and I can't fly in the dark."

"Dirty Shirt and Scenery is both asleep p in Masterson's saloon, and if yuh could ake 'em up yuh might git 'em to help yuh ut. They'd do most anythin' to git the ommittee to loosen up on that five hundred. ist explain to 'em that yore gittin' the ɣorst of it on the safe and sane idea, and 'm bettin' you'll git help."

"I'll try," sez he. "I ain't got uh hope ɛft but I'll try."

I watches him amble up town and then weaves down to the baseball range. The rowd is all out on uh flat above the jail, ınd accordin' to the conversation I hears ɣhen I gits in yellin' distance, there's uh lifference of opinion. I'm almost an in-egral part of the herd when out comes Hank Padden, Slim Hawkins, Johnny Myers and Magpie Simpkins. They meets me in uh body.

"Ike," asks Slim, "how is yore affections pointin'?"

"My dad was uh Missourian and maw was uh Swede. I leans strong towards Democracy and I hate sheep."

"We ain't interested in yore ancestors and politics," states Johnny. "What we wants to know is, does yore heart quicken more at the mention of the Seven-A or the Triangle?"

"My heart's plumb normal, Johnny," sez I. "It takes more'n the mention of two bum cow-outfits to affect my pulse. What's the main idea of the fool question?"

"He'll do," grins Slim, and the rest of 'em nods, wise-like.

Magpie takes me by the arm and waltzes me out in front of the crowd.

"Ladies and gents, here's the empire," he announces, dustin' the ground with his hat.

The crowd gits hilarious in their remarks and I gits sore.

"Magpie," sez I, "jist as soon as I finds out the meanin' uh that word when it's applied to uh human bein' there's shore goin' to be room fer one more Simpkins in Piperock. I'm jist uh pore ol' pelican of uh person, but I'm danged if I wants to be slaughtered to make uh safe and sane holiday. I won't stand fer to be made fun of thataway."

"Fun——!" snorts Hank. "Ike, yore honored!"

"I'll be danged if I am. I'm half drunk and the other half peeved. What's the joke?"

"Ike," sez Buck, handin' me uh roll in uh buckskin sack, "I wish yuh to hold this here money. You, bein' absolutely neutral like, are the logical one to hold it. Yuh see the money belongs to either Dirty or Scenery. Dirty gives me two hundred and fifty to bet on the Seven-A, and when Scenery opines to wager that amount I matches the bets. You pay to the winner. Sabe?"

I stuffs the roll in my pocket, and Slim pats me on the shoulder.

"Yore to be the referee uh this here game, Ike," sez he. "It's up to you to pass judgment on the outs and safes. Yore the only person in Piperock what ain't placed uh bet on the game and that places yuh in uh position uh trust. Sabe?"

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"Uh-huh," I agree. "Bein' uh li'l rusty on the fine points of the game I'd be glad to have somebody wise me up uh li'l."

Right then I gits uh load of information. Ain't it wonderful how much uh feller can listen to in five minutes? Uh course I don't remember much of it, but I shore hears uh lot fer uh person with only two ears.

As near as I can tell, uh ball game consists uh nine men on uh side. I'm there to tell when uh man's out and also when he ain't. Also, when the pitcher person throws uh ball over uh certain piece uh board, and the feller what's waitin' there with uh club don't hit it, I'm to yell, "Strike!" If it ain't throwed over I yells "Ball!" I absorbs the information that if somebody ketches uh hit ball the feller what hit it is out. The main idea seems to be that uh feller's got to run all around that square, touchin' each sack uh sand and finally step on that piece uh lumber without bein' called out by me, and that tallies one point fer his side.

"NOW that yuh knows all about it, Ike, yuh might as well yell, 'Play ball!'" informs Magpie. "Jist yell what I told yuh to, and we'll show this here congregation some game. I'm pitchin' fer our side, and I'll wise yuh up as we goes along. I wants yuh to keep yore eye on this here ball cause she's goin' to perform different than yuh think. Ike, I ain't never told yuh that I can throw uh crooked ball have I? Uh harness drummer, who was down at Curlew showed me how to do it."

"Well, Magpie," sez I, "far be it from me to criticize uh feller blunderer, but I'm uh heap sad-like to find that my ol' pal is startin' to learn the crooked parts of uh game before he learns the rules."

About this time the crowd begins to yell unpleasant things, and out hops Johnny Myers with uh war club. He braces hisself over that piece uh lumber and spits on his hands.

Slim Hawkins and Swede Johnson is off to my right and behind me is Ricky Henderson. To my left is Pete Gonyer, and way out like uh sort of uh rear guard stands Mort Blackwell, Hen Peck and Andy Johnson.

"Ike," sez Magpie, as the cheerin' dwindles, "watch me twist this one."

He did. He twisted it so danged much that it cut across lots and slaps plumb ag'in ol' Sam Holt's stummick. Ol' Sam is some larded around the equator, and it takes some prospectin' to locate the ball. Pore ol' Sam is uh heap disgusted and favors his insides when he walks.

"Throw her over, yuh cross between uh lodge-pole and uh picket-rope!" yells Johnny poundin' on that piece uh lumber with his club.

I'd opine that baseball ain't no game fer uh feller to git absent-minded when playin' same, 'cause while Johnny is takin' his spite out on that piece uh lumber Magpie hits him in the butt of his ear with the ball. Johnny drops to his knees, gits right up and walks circles like uh pup tryin' to git wound up fer uh sleep.

Not havin' any such rulin' explained to me I turns to Magpie fer uh li'l light on the subject.

"Yell 'Out!'" whispers Magpie.

I did. Somehow I don't reckon it was the right word, cause that whole danged bunch uh Triangle hoss thieves comes out to visit me. Immediate and quick I'm surrounded with uh conglomeration uh punchers and the talk drifts to serious subjects.

"Out!" yelps "Cobalt" Williams in my ear, makin' faces like uh hired murderer. "Why you cross between uh pole-cat and uh hunk uh cheese, that was uh dead ball!"

"——!" sez I, sad-like, takin' off my hat. "Did it kill the ball?"

"He ain't out!" whoops "Half-Mile" Smith, walkin' on my shins with both feet. "He's entitled to his base."

"Well," sez I, "there ain't nobody stoppin' him is there? If it's his why don't he go and git it? If it's goin' to cause uh commotion like this he can have 'em all so far as I'm concerned. Jist to show that I don't begrudge 'em to him I'll help him carry 'em home. Mebby I was uh li'l previous in my judgment, gents, I believe I spoke before I looked close-like, so I rules that he's only partly out."

"Cripes!" snorts "Tellurium" Woods, "I wish we had uh man with uh few brains."

"So do I, Tellurium," I agrees, hearty-like. "If I could find three of 'em I'd take 'em up town and start uh four-handed poker game."

Johnny Myers limps up to the base that Pete's guardin', and stands on it with both feet. Ain't it funny how uh wallop on the head makes some people limp?

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"That's all right, Ike," sez Magpie, when he sees me lookin' at Johnny. "He gits to first fer nothin'."

I nods my head but I got my own opinion. Fer nothin', eh? I suppose if he had shot Johnny with uh .45 they'd have ruled it uh scratch.

Now up comes Cobalt. I reckon he's nervous, and don't wish to git his base fer nothin', cause he takes his stand quite uh ways from that piece uh lumber. Magpie waves that ball around his head uh few times and lets her go.

The ball didn't go noways toward Cobalt, but I don't reckon that Cobalt knowed it. He swings hisself plumb off his feet and the club sails out of his hands.

It changes ends about seventeen times and hits "Slim" Hawkins square on the wishbone. Slim expels all the air out of his system and collapses.

This time I ain't goin' to show my ignorance of the game. I gallops right over, grabs Slim by the back of the neck, and starts haulin' him over to Pete's station.

"Say, what do yuh reckon yore tryin' to do?" yells "Sourdough" Watson.

"In uh case like this, Sourdough, he's entitled to his base. I'm sick uh bein' interfered with. Sabe?"

"Ike, yuh danged fool, Slim's on our side!" howls Magpie. "He ain't entitled to nothin'."

"Ain't, eh?" I snaps. "The least we can do is to give him uh decent burial. Mebby accordin' to rules he ain't entitled to nothin', but jist the same he's uh friend uh mine and I won't stand around and let the coyotes git him."

Jist then Slim wheezes and sets up.

"That's the sixth time that bronc's dumped me," he states, foolish-like. "By cripes! I ought to have pulled leather when I sees him pitchin' over that rock-pile thataway."

Uh delegation uh citizens comes out and removes Slim, still protestin' that he'll bet ten dollars he can ride that bronc.

Uh li'l runt named Blinky Bowers takes Slim's place, and the war is on ag'in.

Cobalt hits the next one. Jist why I didn't git out of the way I don't know. Uh course uh empire's duty ain't to git in the line of the ball, but dang it all, I couldn't help it. I puts up my hands like I saw the rest of 'em do, but the ball pilgrims right on through and busts me right on the nose.

After the church bells stops jinglin', they notifies me that the Triangle has got one score. I proposes three cheers fer the Triangle but there ain't no response. My voice is weak and I'm surrounded by Seven-A sympathizers.

Ren Merton is the next one to have uh try at the ball. Ren is as long as uh rustler's dream, and he hits that pore li'l defenseless ball with everything he's got from his boot-heels on up to his hat.

Over to one side uh bunch uh dogs is holdin' uh convention, and that ball enters their midst on the hop. Uh hound pup, belongin' to Scenery Sims, tries to masticate that ball, with the results that when we ropes that pup the ball is some weak in the seams.

"*Yeo-w-w-w!*" whoops Johnny Myers. "That makes three runs fer our side! Cobalt finishes up his run and Ren tallies uh home run."

"I wish to state," sez Judge Steele, holdin' up his hand like Ajax defyin' the lightnin', "I wish to state that them two last tallies don't count. Wait uh minute, Johnny! Don't git excited. This here celebration is uh heap safe and sane so far and we don't wish to sully it, and it makes me nervous in the trigger finger to see uh feller fussin' with his gun thataway. Now, them danged dogs ain't got no business there uh-tall. Natcherally they interferes with the proper interpretation of the rules to the extent that Mister Harper has to fall back on legal practise.

"Me, bein' uh legal licensed dispenser uh justice, is qualified to adjudicate this difficulty, and I wishes to hereby confer in private with the empire. May I have the privilege, Mister Harper?"

"Judge," sez I, uh heap relieved, "I'm reciprocative to advice. I'm willin' to do anythin' except to try to smell. I shore got some nose on me."

The judge leads me away from the admirin' throng and gits confidential.

"Ike," sez he, "have yuh uh bit uh likker on yore person? I feels like uh drought in Death Valley, and uh shot uh pain-killer would elevate me uh heap."

I slips the ol' boy uh bottle, and he depletes it to the bottom of the label. Then he pats me on the back and whispers:

"Ike, ol'-timer, I got six head uh broncs and eighty pieces uh silver bet on the Seven-A to win. Sabe? One uh them broncs is

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that runnin' hound of uh blaze-faced sorrel you admires. Do yuh still covet it?"

"I bows to superior judgment," sez I. "Let's go ahead and see how bad the Seven-A can beat that bunch."

I ANNOUNCES to the crowd that me and the judge has threshed out the verdict accordin' to the rules of love, life and leegality to all mankind, and has decided that them two tallies don't count fer the reason that the ball has been interfered with.

I find that our decision causes immediate discord. Half-Mile Smith is the first one to greet me.

"You danged sheep-stealer!" he howls, walkin' around me like he was lookin' fer an easy place to start eatin'. "Yore tryin' to throw this here game to the Seven-A. Dad bust yore soul!"

"Gentlemen!" sez I, holdin' up my hand in the Piegan peace sign. "Let there be no blood shed. Let us not git up in the dewy mornin' with our hearts filled with sadness and regrets. I has had legal advice on the action and, coupled with my natcheral admiration fer fair play, I rules as I do."

Seems to me that some folks knows more about me and my ancestors than I do, and I learns uh heap right there. Fer instance, Sourdough Watson informs me that my granddad stole pennies from uh blind man. I has to laugh when Cobalt states that I'm uh direct descendant uh Jesse James. That jist shows how men make mistakes when they're excited.

"Bantie" Weyman and "Sig" Watson each hits three times and misses. Half-Mile Smith jist touches one with his club. It glances off and hives up in Weinie's bosom, and Weinie hangs onto it instead of his wind, and nearly dies.

Magpie explains to me that it's uh foul ball, and that Half-Mile is out, so I rules likewise to the satisfaction of all men present.

"Now we goes in to bat," sez Magpie, and I gits glad right away and walks in with him. I feels the need of uh li'l rest, but the Triangle gang objects.

"You empires fer both sides," explains Johnny Myers, and I has to amble out there ag'in.

"If yore sense uh fair play ain't molderin' in the grave yuh might give the Triangle uh li'l the best of it now," whines Tellurium.

"Tellurium," sez I, "if folks in Piperock played fair with you and themselves we'd be enjoyin' uh lynchin' instead of uh ball game right now. If you don't stop kickin' about things what is too deep fer yore meager comprehension I'm goin' to git some blanks fer uh .22 pistol and shoot yore brains out. Sabe?"

Magpie Simpkins is the first batter fer the Seven-A. If Magpie never does another thing he shore can point with pride to the fact that he's hit uh ball further than it's ever been hit before or since in Piperock.

He slams that pore li'l ball plumb out to where Tellurium is standin'. Tellurium is baldheaded, and he opines to play without uh hat. Somehow that bald head seems to act like uh magnet fer the ball. Tellurium can't seem to look right into the sun, and jist stands there like uh stachoo. When the ball and bald head comes together there's uh slitherin' sound, and said ball hits the high places off into the sagebrush. I rules that it's legitimate fer Magpie to count one run, and the Seven-A outfit gits delirious. That makes one run each. The judge comes out and congratulates me on my judgment, and takes the rest of that bottle back with him.

"She ain't goin' to stand much more," complains Johnny Myers, holdin' the ball out so I can look her over. It shore looks weak in the seams.

"Git uh new one," I advises, but Johnny shakes his head.

"Can't be done, Ike. We've done used this one fer two weeks, and figgered that she'd finish the season fer us but I has my doubts. This is the only one there is."

Weinie Lopp comes up to that piece uh lumber and bows his back like uh bull buffalo with uh peeve.

Johnny throws the ball as hard as he can and Cobalt ducks out from behind Weinie and slides fer safety. He didn't need to be scared cause that ball never got past Weinie. He cuts loose with that club and busts that ball plumb in two.

Yes sir, he jist simply annihilates that ball. One-half, or what I'd designate as one-half of it, rolls out to me, and the other portion defies gravity long enough fer Ren Merton to gallop under it and clasp it to his bosom.

Weinie takes one look and gallops around the station. On the second one he gits his

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spurs tangled in the sack and sprains his ankle, but he's game to limp the rest of the way.

"He's out!" whoops Johnny Myers, dancin' up and down on his hat, but I holds up my hand fer silence. Piperock comes out to me in uh cluster and they all opines to talk to oncet. Nobody could live in such uh atmosphere, so I tears loose and pulls my gun. If I must die I'm shore goin' to die hard.

"Put up yore gun!" howls Half-Mile. "He's out and that's all there is to it."

"I'll put up nothin'!" I announces. "If you danged howlin' pack uh coyotes will shut yore yap fer uh minute mebby I'll render judgment on it."

"Be guided by yore conscience, Ike," advises the judge.

"No game!" yells Bantie. "No game uh-tall! The Seven-A has got one run and so has the Triangle. We can't settle no ties fer the reason that we ain't got no ball. It's jist uh tie game, and that's all there is to it."

"Lissen," sez I. "I was elected empire uh this here pastime, wasn't I? Didn't yuh tell me that I was to do the rulin' on it at all times? Didn't yuh all agree to accept my judgment?"

"Mister Harper speaks true," orates the judge. "You-all gives him power of attorney to render uh verdict accordin' to the evidence."

"I'd propose," squeaks Tellurium, wormin' his fat carcass to the center of the throng, "I'd propose that we forms uh committee to settle this. It ain't hardly fair fer one man to have to settle uh momentous question like that."

I pushes my way out of the crowd—still hangin' onto my gun and my temper, and waves both arms fer silence. I'm commencin' to lose my temper.

"Gents," sez I, "hang on to yoreselves! I'm about to render uh verdict accordin' to the evidence and my own common-sense The Triangle makes one tally——"

"So did the Seven-A," interrupts Ricky Henderson.

"I'm goin' to impeach the next man what interrupts," states the judge, and I continues:

"The Seven-A also makes one run, which makes the game uh tie so far as them tallies is concerned, but here's the evidence: Weinie hits the ball so danged hard that she busts plumb in two. One-half uh that ball is ketched by Ren Merton, and the other half lies supine on the ground. Accordin' to what I've been informed, when uh feller hetches uh ball the feller what hits it is out, but I interprets it to mean, all uh the ball. Weinie runs all the way around, when he's half out, so I has to decide that the Seven-A wins this here game by uh score of one and uh half to one."

Uh feller named Service wrote uh poem oncet, in which he spoke about uh stillness yuh most could hear, but I got him beat—I could hear this one. It was so danged audible it hurt my ears, until I hears uh *click! click!* Nobody can fool me on that noise. I recognizes it right away as the preparedness racket of uh single-action Colt. The next sound is uh snicker from the judge, and the crowd begins to show signs uh life.

I tightens my grip on my six-gun and braces my feet, and then comes the *rattle, rattle rattle*, of uh lumber wagon, and somebody yells—

"Look out!"

I didn't have uh chance to look out. Somebody mistook me fer open atmosphere and hits me plumb in the middle, and then somebody else uses my face fer uh steppin' stone.

"Ah, ha!" sez I to myself. "Somethin' ain't right." And then I staggers to my feet in time to meet the attraction.

Somethin' hits me before I gits the dirt out of my eyes, and willin' hands lifts me up. I grabs onto somethin', and finds that my hands is lovin'ly entwined around the brake-pole of uh wagon.

"Well," sez I, "I didn't git shot, anyway," and then I glances around in time to see Scenery Sims turn uh flip-flop in the bottom of the wagon, and spin on his ear. The next thing, the wagon hits uh washout and I acts as uh bumper fer one Dirty Shirt Jones, who hangs on to me like I was his long lost brother.

There ain't no time fer conversation. Dirty tries to yell somethin' in my ear, but scoots down and tells it to the front end of the wagon, and Scenery gits his boots in my face instead.

AT TIMES that wagon is runnin' on one front wheel, with all of us in the front end, and then she seems to r'ar up like uh bronc and we're deposited to the end-gate with neatness and dispatch.

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I ain't never had no time yet to see what we're drivin', until on one uh my up-country trips I casually glances at our means of locomotion and observes that danged balloon ag'in.

There's about fifty feet uh rope between the wagon tongue and the bag, and, with the help of uh stiff wind, she's shore exceedin' the speed limit.

She's uh good rig so long as she seeks flat places, but after takin' uh short look into the future I opines to myself that the time ain't far distant when Ike Harper is safer off than on. Ahead of us is the Medicine and Sawtooth Hills, and I can see what's goin' to happen when that wagon hits uh washout deep enough to block the front wheels.

I glances around and sees Dirty and Scenery tryin' to anchor themselves long enough to pull the cork out of uh bottle. We're goin' too fast fer uh feller to take uh chance on jumpin' and the more I looks the more I wishes I was up there with the li'l balloon-feller, who is hangin' onto his li'l swing like uh bluejay in uh wind.

Sudden-like I gits uh great idea. If I can git hold of that rope and climb far enough away from that wagon I'd be uh heap better off than I am now, and if the rope breaks above me I won't have much farther to fall.

Did yuh ever have to crawl out on uh wagon tongue and claw yore way up uh rope, when the wind is blowin' and said tongue is first three feet and then fifteen feet off the ground—and do it with leather chaps on?

I know it can be done. I jist shut my eyes, named every brand in Yaller Rock County out loud, and when I gits down to the Z-Bar-Z I'm fifteen feet up that rope with blistered hands and shy one boot.

I reckon there must be uh heap uh wind blowin' cause that balloon swoops and pitches like uh prize bucker. I don't git off that wagon none too soon, yuh can gamble on that. I locks one leg around that rope and looks back jist in time to see that wagon take uh header into uh gully. Mebby you think that shock wasn't uh peach.

She yanks the waddin' out uh me fer uh minute, but I hangs on with everythin' from toenails to my dandruff. I glances back after uh few seconds of handsome clawin' and Dirty Shirt is jist comin' down. He shore must uh went high. I watches fer Scenery but I reckon he either didn't care to go or else he went above the spot where gravity affects danged fools.

Relieved of its drawback, that balloon opines to associate with buzzards, and we goes up so danged fast that the Sleepin' Crick country seems to be fallin' downhill on all sides. I glances up at the li'l feller and he makes motions which I interprets to mean, "Hang on!" I wondered if the blamed fool thought I was goin' to let loose?

Hangin' onto uh inch rope with blisters on yore hands ain't no joyful chore, so I hauls up uh li'l rope under my belt, and slips my gun through the loop. That's easier on my hands but it shore makes misery in my stummick.

We're driftin' with the wind all the time, and pretty soon somethin' seems to git under the earth and shove it right up at us. I sings uh song uh joy when it gits close and tries to pull that gun loose so I can jump.

It's shore fatal to try to pull uh gun and find she's caught. Comes uh rattle uh limbs and darkness covers the land.

When I awakes it ain't in no hospital with uh sweet-faced nurse leanin' over my cot. Nothin' like that showed up when Ike Harper returned to the land of the livin'.

I finds that I'm reclinin' on my back with my feet up uh tree. I rolls over so I can see why, and finds that my belt has slipped down around my knees and is looped over the limb of uh tree. I slides painful-like out of it and braces myself ag'in the tree.

"Well," sez I, "at that I believe I prefers the balloon to the maddenin' crowd." And jist then I sees uh head shove up over the crick bank, and uh weak voice opines, wailin'ly:

"Them blamed fools didn't slack the rope uh-tall. They jist climbed in and let off the brake and——"

The voice ceased and the head went out uh sight.

I fishes in my pockets fer the makin's and finds that roll uh bills. I shoves 'em back and climbs down the bank. The balloon feller is draped over uh log, unconscious.

Somethin' seems familiar about that part of the crick, and it finally dawns on me that I'm at the water-hole where me and Magpie gits our drinkin' water fer our claim. Right over the east bank is our cabin. I rolls the feller over and throws some water in his face. He looks at me in uh sad sort of uh way and shakes his head.

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"Five hundred all shot to —— jist because two blamed fools wanted to ride!"

I hauls out that roll and peels her to the core. Five hundred to uh gnat's eyelash.

"Here's yore renumeration," sez I, handin' him the money. "You flew."

He counts it careful-like and then gits to his feet. He glances all around and then starts to climb the bank.

"Wait uh minute!" I yells. "I got uh cabin right over there where we'll stay fer uh while. No use goin' away like that. Look at it in uh sane manner and you'll agree that it ain't safe fer you to try to git back alone thataway."

"Mister." The feller picks up uh rock about as big as my fist, and looks down at me. "While I appreciates yore kindness in comin' way up here to pay me fer my exhibition, you jist used two words that's obnoxious to me. Sabe? Safe and sane——!"

I turns around and ducks low, but the li'l feller was too good uh shot to miss at that range.

That rock bounces off my vertebray and I falls in the crick. I rolls out, rubs my back with one hand and reaches fer my gun with the other—but my gun is absent.

At the top of the hill the li'l feller turns and waves his hand at me. Jist to show him that I don't blame him—I waves right back.

JACK TAR

by JOHN G. GARTLAND

WE'RE not long on education,
We're just rough and ready gobs,
But we rate ten gadgets higher
Than some smug civilian snobs.

When we're out on well-earned shore-leave,
Drummin' up a little cheer,
Oh, we meet sleek city dandies
Who "object to sailors here."

They are togged in pretty sport-shirts
Like a lady on parade,
And they wouldn't touch a sailor
With a pole or with a spade.

When you're treated like a leper
By a cross 'twixt ape and newt,
Then it sort of gets you hankerin'
To give him belt and boot.

When they put up signs in Boston:
"Dogs and sailors not allowed,"
It's enough to make you trample
On your uniform so proud.

In Manhattan's gilded rest'ra'nts
They keelhaul you at the door
With a: "Got a seat reserved, sir?"
That is Jackie's meed ashore.

Though we aren't "ornamental"
In the tinseled dansant halls,
When the nation needs defenders,
We are there when duty calls.

Though we can't hobnob with laggards
Who sleep safe in sheltered bed,
Though we can't enjoy peace-pleasures,
We can "join the hero-dead."

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HIRA SINGH'S TALE

by Talbot Mundy

A FOUR-PART STORY

Part II

Author of "The Soul of a Regiment," "The Damned Old Nigger," etc.

The First Part of the Story Briefly Retold in Story Form

Hear my tale, sahib.

We were the first of all the Indian regiments to ride out of Delhi and sail for the French front. That was an honor. But we hung our heads in shame, for Ranjoor Singh, our Sikh major was not with us. We remembered that he spoke German fluently. Many said he had turned traitor. I, Hira Singh was a non-commissioned officer and I of but a few still had faith in Ranjoor Singh. I was not pleased when Gooja Singh of my same rank remarked—

"Let us hope he may die like a rat and bring no more shame on us."

The day came when we reached France and the fighting-lines. It was just as we were awaiting the command for our first charge that I turned and heard our English colonel exclaim:

"Ranjoor Singh! Thank God, old man! You've come in the nick of time!"

So I was right. He was with us before the blood ran.

That was a night of nights, sahib. We rode behind Ranjoor Singh into the Germans as wind cuts into a forest. That one setback checked their advance along the whole line. What are color and creed? We Sikhs be men, with the hearts of men; and that night we knew that our hearts and those of the British were one. But be attentive, sahib; my story is of Ranjoor Singh and what he did.

The days in the trenches dragged on. We learned that Ranjoor Singh had stayed behind in India to expose a German plot. Yet a new distrust of him arose. He talked with the Germans across the trenches. Gooja Singh led the grumbling—a dangerous man.

Then one evening we were ordered to charge again. When dawn came we were completely surrounded. Our English colonel was sorely wounded. Just before he died I heard him say to Ranjoor Singh:

"You're in command now. Shepherd 'em. Good-by, old friend."

For days of misery and hunger we stood the Germans off. To fight our way back to the British lines was death. It had not entered the hearts of any of us to surrender. It was the only way, yet when Ranjoor Singh bade us lay down our rifles, I hated him in that minute.

When we reached the German trench two hundred and three and fifty of us, including wounded, were left alive. Ranjoor Singh was led apart. The rest of us were led to the rear lines and then herded into cattle-trucks. For five days we traveled and then we were placed in a prison-camp.

Week after week passed. German officers told us that Ranjoor Singh was working with them in Berlin. I still believed in him; the rest cursed him as unfaithful. They asked that he be brought to them. Secretly they said that if he talked treason they would tear him limb from limb.

Ranjoor Singh came clothed in a new German uniform. But as we looked in his face we knew that he understood things which we did not, and much of our distrust of him vanished for the time being.

"I know the thoughts ye think," said he. "I will give you a real thought. This is a regiment. I am its last surviving officer. As major of this regiment I have accepted a certain offer made in Berlin and as its major I now command your obedience. The Germans have a plan. Mark well my orders. Listen to it and pretend to agree. Then shall you be given weapons. Then you shall leave this camp within a week."

Presently came the Germans to us and offered us the alternative of working in the coal-mines or fighting for the Central powers. Many of the regiment thought that Ranjoor Singh had led us into a trap. There was much grumbling. I asked to see Ranjoor Singh.

"If we sign an oath of allegiance to Germany," said I, "how do we know they will not bring it to the notice of the British?"

"If they chained us and we broke the chains, they might send the broken links to London in proof of what thieves we be," replied Ranjoor Singh. "I intend to sign whatever the Germans ask."

So we all signed as we were bid and each was given a rifle. But my heart warned me that the Germans would not trust a regiment seduced as we were supposed to have been.

Next day we were marched to the railroad station. Some of our wounded had died and we numbered two hundred and five and thirty. So we entrained and for days we traveled we knew not whither.

A German sergeant, Fritz Tugendheim, came aboard. He had lived in India.

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"Beware of him," whispered Ranjoor Singh.

At last I found that we were on the way to Constantinople. When I told the men, the majority decided we were to be sent to Gallipoli to fight beside the Turks. Once there, said they all, it should be easy to cross to the British trenches under cover of darkness.

"We will take Ranjoor Singh with us," they said darkly, for they continued to distrust his motives.

After we arrived in Stamboul—or Constantinople, as Europeans call it—Ranjoor Singh came to us with Tugendheim at his heels.

"The plan is to keep us here a week," said he. "After that to send us to Gallipoli by steamer."

But I never could have guessed how Ranjoor Singh would lead us out of the trap. Can the sahib guess?

Ranjoor Singh spent much time with German officers poring over maps and talking. I went to speak with him as often as I could invent excuse and I heard the word *Wassmuss* used very frequently. I wondered what it could mean.

Next day we were given a full month's pay. In the pitch-dark we were marched aboard a steamer. Tugendheim and the Turkish captain were all to guard us but a regiment of Kurds was coming aboard later.

Ranjoor Singh called me aside.

"Pick the four most dependable men," he ordered, "and bid them enter the cabin and gag and bind Tugendheim."

I saw that the deed was accomplished, not letting the men know from whom came the orders, for I feared they might not obey. Following out Ranjoor Singh's orders again in the same manner I collected the money the men had been paid by the Germans and handed it over to our leader.

The men grew restless. In order to calm them I made a guess at Ranjoor Singh's plan and remarked:

"Ranjoor Singh will bribe the captain of the ship to steam away before that regiment of Kurds can come on board. So we shall have the ship at our mercy."

Then our ship began to move out slowly into the darkness without lights or sounding whistle. There was no sign of Ranjoor Singh, nor had I time to look for him; I was busy making the men be still, urging, coaxing, cursing—even striking them.

"Are we off to Gallipoli?" they asked.

"We are off to where a true man may remember the salt!" said I, knowing no more than they.

I KNOW of nothing more confusing to a landsman, sahib, than a crowded harbor at night. The many searchlights all quivering and shifting in the one direction only made confusion worse, and we had not been moving two minutes when I no longer knew north from south or east from west. I looked up, to try and judge by the stars. I had actually forgotten it was raining. The rain came down in sheets and overhead the sky began at little more than arm's length! Judge then my excitement!

We passed very close to several small steamers that may have been war-ships, but I think they were merchant ships converted into gunboats to hunt submarines. I think, too, that in the darkness they mistook us for another of the same sort, for, although we almost collided with two of them, they neither fired on us nor challenged. We steamed straight past them, beginning to gain speed as the last one fell away behind.

Does the sahib remember whether the passage from Stamboul into the Sea of Marmora runs south or east or west? Neither could I remember, although at another time I could have drawn a map of it, having studied such things. But memory plays us strange tricks, and cavalrymen were never intended to maneuver in a ship! Ranjoor Singh, up in the wheel-house, had a map—a good map, that he had stolen from the German officers—but I did not know that until later. I stood with both hands holding the rails of the bridge ladder, wondering whether gunfire or submarine would sink us and urging the men to keep their heads below the bulwark lest a searchlight find us and the number of heads cause suspicion.

I have often tried to remember just how many hours we steamed from Stamboul, yet I have no idea to this day beyond that the voyage was ended before dawn. It was all unexpected—we were too excited, and too fearful for our skins to recall the passage of hours. It was darker than I have ever known night to be, and the short waves that made our ship pitch unevenly were growing steeper every minute, when Ranjoor Singh came at last to the head of the ladder and shouted for me. I went to him up the steps, holding to each rail for dear life.

"Take twenty men," he ordered, "and uncover the forward hatch. Throw the hatch coverings overboard. The hold is full of cartridges. Bring up some boxes and break them open. Distribute two hundred rounds to every man, and throw the empty boxes overboard. Then get up twenty more boxes and place them close together, in readiness to take with us when we leave the ship. Let me know when that is all done."

So I took twenty men and we obeyed him. Two hundred rounds of cartridges a man made a heavy extra load and the troopers grumbled.

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"Can we swim with these?" they demanded.

"Who knows until he has tried?" said I.

"How far may we have to march with such an extra weight?" said they.

"Who knows!" said I, counting out two hundred more to another man. "But the man," I said, "who lacks one cartridge of the full count when I come to inspect, shall be put to the test whether he can swim with what he has left!"

Some of them had begun to throw half of their two-hundred into the water, but after I said that they discontinued, and I noticed that those who had so done came back for more cartridges pretending that my count had been short. So I served them out more and said nothing. There were hundreds of thousands of rounds in the hold of the ship, and I judged I could afford to overlook the waste! At last we set the extra twenty boxes in one place together, slipping and falling in the process because the deck was wet and the ship unsteady; and then I went and reported to Ranjoor Singh.

"Very good," said he. "Make the men fall in along the deck, and bid them be ready for whatever may befall!"

"Are we near land, sahib?" said I.

"Very near!" said he.

I ran to obey him, peering into the blackness to discover land, but I could see nothing more than the white tops of waves, and clouds that seemed to meet the sea within a rope's length of us. Once or twice I thought I heard surf, but the noise of the rain and of the engines and of the waves pounding against the ship confused my ears, so that I could not be certain.

When the men were all fallen in and stood at ease I went and leaned over the bulwark to try to see better; and as I did that we ran in under a cliff, for the darkness grew suddenly much darker. Then I surely heard surf. Then another sound startled me, and a shock nearly threw me off my feet. I faced about, to find twenty or thirty men sprawling their length upon the deck, and when I had urged and helped them up the engines had stopped turning, and steam was roaring savagely through the funnel. The motion of the ship was different now; the front part seemed almost still, but the behind part rose and fell jerkily.

I busied myself with the men, bullying them into silence, for I judged it most important to be able to hear the first order that Ranjoor Singh might give; but he gave none just yet, although I heard a lot of talking on the bridge.

"Is this Gallipoli?" the men kept asking me in whispers.

"If it were," said I, "we should have been blown into little pieces by the guns of both sides before now!"

If I had been offered all the world for a reward I could not have guessed our whereabouts, nor what we were likely to do next, but I was very sure we had not reached Gallipoli.

Presently the Turkish seamen began lowering the boats. There were but four boats, and they made clumsy work of it, but at last all four boats were in the water; and then Ranjoor Singh began at last to give his orders, in a voice, and with an air that brought reassurance. No man could command as he did who had the least little doubt in his heart of eventual success. There is as much conviction in a man's voice as in his eye.

He ordered us overside eight at a time, and me in the first boat with the first eight.

"Fall them in along the first flat place you find on shore, and wait there for me!" said he.

And I said, "Ha, sahib!" wondering as I swung myself down a swaying rope whether my feet could ever find the boat. But the sailors pulled the rope's lower end, and I found myself in a moment wedged into a space into which not one more man could have been crowded.

The waves broke over us, and there was a very evil surf, but the distance to the shore was short and the sailors proved skilful. We landed safely on a gravelly beach, not so very much wetter than we had been, except for our legs—for we waded the last few yards—and I hunted at once for a piece of level ground. Just thereabouts it was all nearly level, so I fell my eight men in within twenty yards of the surf, and waited. I felt tempted to throw out pickets, yet afraid not to obey implicitly. Ranjoor Singh had given no order about pickets.

I JUDGE it took more than an hour, and it may have been two hours, to bring all the men and the twenty boxes of cartridges ashore. At last in three boats came the captain of the ship, and the mate, and the engineer, and nearly all the

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crew. Then I grew suddenly afraid and hot sweat burst out all over me, for by the one lantern that had been hung from the ship's bridge-rail to guide the rowers I could see that the ship was moving! The ship's captain had climbed out of the last boat and was standing close to it. I went up to him and seized his shoulder.

"What dog's work is this?" said I. "Speak!" I said, shaking him, although he could not talk any tongue that I knew—but I shook him none the less until his teeth chattered, and, his arms being wrapped in that great shawl of his, there was little he could do to prevent me.

As I live, sahib, on the word of a Sikh I swear that not even in that instant did I doubt Ranjoor Singh. I believed that the Turkish captain might have stabbed him, or that Tugendheim might have played some trick. But not so the men. They saw the lantern receding and receding, dancing with the motion of the ship, and they believed themselves deserted.

"Quick! Fire on him!" shouted some one. "Let him not escape! Kill him before he is out of range!"

I never knew which trooper it was who raised that cry, although I went to some trouble to discover afterward. But I heard Gooja Singh, daffadar even as I, laugh like a hyena; and I heard the click of cartridges thrust into magazines. I was half minded to let them shoot, hoping they might hit Tugendheim. But the Turk freed his arms at last, and began struggling.

"Look!" he said to me in English. "*Voila!*" said he in French. "*Regardez!* Look—See!"

I did look, and I saw enough to make me make swift decision. The light was nearer to the water—quite a lot nearer. I flung myself on the nearest trooper, whose rifle was already raised, and taken by surprise he loosed his weapon. With it I beat the next ten men's rifles down, and they clattered on the beach. That made the others pause and look at me.

"The man who fires the first shot dies!" said I, striving to nake the breath come evenly between my teeth for sake of dignity, yet with none too great success.

But in the principal matter I was successful, for they left their alignment and clustered round to argue with me. At that I refused to have speech with them until they should have fallen in again, as befitted soldiers. Falling in took time, especially as they did it sulkily; and when the noise of shifting feet was finished I heard oars thumping in the oarlocks.

A boat grounded amid the surf, and Ranjoor Singh jumped out of it, followed by Tugendheim and his four guards. The boat's crew leaped into the water and hauled the boat high and dry, and as they did that I saw the ship's lantern disappear altogether.

Ranjoor Singh went straight to the Turkish captain.

"Your money," said he, speaking in English slowly—I wonder, sahib, oh I have wondered a thousand times in what medley of tongues strange to all of them they had done their bargaining!—"Your money," said he, "is in the boat in which I came. Take it, and take your men, and go!"

The captain and his crew said nothing, but got into the boats and pushed away. One of the boats was overturned in the surf, and there they left it, the sailors scrambling into the other boats. They were out of sight and sound in two minutes. Then Ranjoor Singh turned to me.

"Send and gather firewood!" he ordered.

"Where shall dry wood be in all this rain?" said I.

"Search!" said he.

"Sahib," said I, "a fire would betray our whereabouts."

"Are you deaf?" said he.

"Nay!" I said.

"Then obey!" said he.

So I took twenty men, and we went stumbling through rain and darkness, hunting for what none of us believed was anywhere. Yet within fifteen minutes we found a hut whose roof was intact, and therefore whose floor and inner parts were dry enough. It was a little hut, of the length of perhaps the height of four men, and the breadth of the height of three—a man and a half high from floor to roof-beam. It was unoccupied, but there was straw at one end—dry straw, on which doubtless guards had slept. I left the men standing there and went and told Ranjoor Singh.

I found him talking to the lined-up men in no gentle manner. As I drew nearer I heard him say the word "*Wassmuss.*" Then I heard a trooper ask him—

"Where are we?" And he answered—"Ye stand on Asia!"

That was the first intimation I received that we were in Asia, and I felt suddenly

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lonely, for I knew how Asia is wondrous big.

Whatever Ranjoor Singh had been saying to the men he had them back under his thumb for the time being; for when I told him of my discovery of the hut he called them to attention, turned them to the right, and marched them off as obedient as a machine, Tugendheim following like a man in a dream between his four guards, struggling now and then to loose the wet thongs that were beginning to cut into his wrists. He had not been trussed overtenderly, but I noticed that Ranjoor Singh had ordered the gag removed.

The hut stood alone, clear on all four sides, and after he had looked at it Ranjoor Singh made the men line up facing the door, with himself and me and Tugendheim between them and the hut. At his order the guard pushed Tugendheim into the hut, and he bade me stand watch by the door.

"Now the man who wishes to ask questions, may," he said then and there was a long silence, for none wished to be accused of impudence and perhaps made an example for the rest.

Besides, they were too curious to know what his next intention might be to care to offend him. So I, seeing that he wished them to speak, and conceiving that to be part of his plan for establishing good feeling asked the first question—the first that came into my head.

"What shall we do with this Tugendheim?" said I.

"That I will show you presently," said he. "Who else has a question to ask?"

And again all was silence, save for the rain and the grinding and pounding on the beach.

Then Gooja Singh made bold, as he usually did when he judged the risk not too great. He was behind the men, which gave him greater courage; and it suited him well to have to raise his voice, because the men might suppose that to be due to insolence, whereas Ranjoor Singh must ascribe it to necessity. Well I knew the method of Gooja Singh's reasoning, and I knitted my fists in a frenzy of fear lest he say the wrong word and start trouble. Yet I need not have worried. I observed that Ranjoor Singh seemed not disturbed at all, and he knew Gooja Singh as well as I.

"It seems for the time being that we have given the slip to both Turks and Germans," said Gooja Singh.

And Ranjoor Singh said—

"Aye! For the time being!"

"And we truly stand on Asia?" he asked.

"Aye!" said Ranjoor Singh.

"Then why did we not put those Turks ashore, and steam away in their ship toward Gallipoli to join our friends?" said he.

"Partly because of submarines," said Ranjoor Singh, "and partly because of gunfire. Partly because of mines floating in the water, and partly again from lack of coal. The bunkers were about empty. It was because there was so little coal that the Germans trusted us alone on board."

"Yet why let the Turks have the steamer?" asked Gooja Singh, bound, now that he was started, to prove himself in the right. "They will float about until daylight and then send signals. Then will come Turks and Germans!"

"Nay!" said Ranjoor Singh. "Not so, for I sank the steamer! I myself let the sea into her hold!"

Gooja Singh was silent for about a minute, and although it was dark and I could not see him I knew exactly the expression of his face—wrinkled thus, and with the lower lip thrust out, so.

"Any more questions?" asked Ranjoor Singh, and by that time Gooja Singh had thought again.

This time he seemed to think he had an unanswerable one, for his voice was full of insolence.

"Then how comes it," said he, "that you turned those Turks loose in their small boats when we might have kept them with us for hostages? Now they will row to the land and set their masters on our tracks! Within an hour or two we shall all be prisoners again! Tell us why!"

"For one thing," said Ranjoor Singh, without any resentment in his voice that I could detect—although *that* was no sign!—"I had to make some sort of bargain with them, and having made it I must keep it. The money with which I bribed the captain and his mate would have been of little use to them unless I allowed them life and liberty as well."

"But they will give the alarm and cause us to be followed!" shouted Gooja Singh, his voice rising louder with each word.

"Nay, I think not!" said Ranjoor Singh, as calmly as ever. "In the first place I have a written receipt from captain and mate for our money, stating the reason for which it was paid; if we were made

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prisoners again that paper would be found n my possession and it might go ill with hose Turks. In the second place they will wish to save their faces. In the third place hey must explain the loss of their steamer. So they will say the steamer was sunk by a submarine, and that they got away in he boats and watched us drown. The crew will bear out what the captain and the mate say, partly from fear, partly because that is the custom of the country, but chiefly because they will receive a small share of the bribe. Let us hope they get back safely—for their story will prevent pursuit!"

For about two minutes again there was silence, and then Gooja Singh called out—

"Why did you not make them take us to Gallipoli?"

"There was not coal enough!" said I, but Ranjoor Singh made a motion to me with his hand.

"The Germans wished us to go to Gallipoli," said he, "and I have noticed that whatever they may desire is expressly intended for their advantage and not ours. In Gallipoli they would have kept us out of range at the rear, and presently they would have caused a picture of us to be taken serving among the Turkish army. That they would have published broadcast. After that I have no idea what would have happened to us, except that I am sure we should never have got near enough to the British lines to make good our escape. We must find another way than that!"

"We might have made the attempt!" said Gooja Singh, and a dozen men murmured approval.

"Simpletons!" he answered. "The Germans laid their plans from first to last for photographs to lend color to lies about Sikh troops fighting for them! Ye would have played into their hands!"

"What then?" said I after a minute, for at that answer they had all grown dumb.

"What then?" said he. "Why, this; we are in Asia, but still on Turkish soil. We need food. We shall need shelter before many hours. And we need discipline, to aid our will to overcome! Therefore there never was a regiment more fiercely disciplined than this shall be! From now until we bring up in a British camp—and God knows when or where that may happen!—the man who as much as thinks of disobedience plays with death! Death—ye be as good as dead men now!" said he.

HE SHOOK himself. A sense of loneliness had come on me since he told us we were in Asia, and I think the men felt as I did. There had been nothing to eat on the steamer, and there was nothing now. Hunger and cold and rain were doing their work. But Ranjoor Singh stood and shook himself, and moved slowly along the line to look in each man's face, and I took new courage from his bearing. If I could have known what he had in store for us I would have leaped and shouted. Yet no, sahib, that is not true. If he had told me what was coming I would never have believed. Can the sahib imagine, for instance, what was to happen next?

"Ye are as good as dead men!" he said, coming back to the center and facing all the men. "Consider!" said he. "Our ship is sunk and the Turks, to save their own skins, will swear they saw us drown. Who, then, will come and hunt for dead men?"

I could see the eyes of the nearest men opening wider as new possibilities began to dawn. As for me—my two hands shook.

"And we have with us," said he, "a hostage who might prove useful—a hostage who might prove amenable to reason. Bring out the prisoner!" said he.

So I bade Tugendheim come forth. He was sitting on the straw where the guards had pushed him, still working sullenly to free his hands. He came and peered through the doorway into darkness, and Ranjoor Singh stood aside to let the men see him. They can not have seen much for it was now that utter gloom that precedes dawn. Nor can Tugendheim have seen much.

"Do you wish to live or die?" asked Ranjoor Singh, and the German gaped at him.

"That is a strange question!" he said.

"Is it strange," asked Ranjoor Singh, "that a prisoner should be asked for information?"

"I am not afraid to die," said Tugendheim.

"You mean by rifle-fire?" asked Ranjoor Singh, and Tugendheim nodded.

"But there are other kinds of fire," said Ranjoor Singh.

"What do you mean?" asked Tugendheim.

"Why," said Ranjoor Singh, "if we were to fire this hut to warm ourselves, and you should happen to be inside it—what then?"

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"If you intend to kill me," said Tugendheim, "why not be merciful and shoot me."

His voice was brave enough, but it seemed to me I detected a strain in it.

"Few Germans are afraid to be shot to death," said Ranjoor Singh.

"But what have I done to any of you that you should want to burn me alive?" asked Tugendheim; and that time I was positive his voice was forced.

"Haven't you been told by your officers," said Ranjoor Singh, "that the custom of us Sikhs is to burn all our prisoners alive?"

"Yes," said Tugendheim. "They told me that. They told us that. But that was only a tale to encourage the first-year men. Having lived in India I knew better."

"Did you trouble yourself to tell anybody better?" asked Ranjoor Singh, but Tugendheim did not answer.

"Then can you give me any reason why you should not be burned alive here, now?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"Yes!" said Tugendheim. "It would be cruel. It would be devils' work!"

He was growing very uneasy, although trying hard not to show it.

"Then give me a name for the tales you have been party to against us Sikhs!" said Ranjoor Singh; but once more the German refrained from answering.

The men were growing very attentive, breathing all in unison and careful to make no sound to disturb the talking. At that instant a great burst of firing broke out over the water, so far away that I could only see one or two flashes, and although that was none too reassuring to us it seemed to Tugendheim like his death-knell. He set his lips and drew back half a step.

"Can you wish to live with the shame of all those lies against us on your heart—you, who have lived in India and know so much better?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"Of course I wish to live!" said Tugendheim.

"Have you any price to offer for your life?" asked Ranjoor Singh, and stepping back two paces he ordered a daffadar with a loud voice to take six men and hunt for dry kindling. "For there is not enough here," said he.

"Price?" said Tugendheim. "I have a handful of coins, and my uniform, and a sword. You left my baggage on the steamer——"

"Nay!" said Ranjoor Singh. "Your baggage came ashore in one of the boats. Where is it? Who has it?"

A man stepped forward and pointed to it, lying in the shadow of the hut with the rain from the roof dripping down on it.

"Who brought it ashore?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"I," said the trooper.

"Then for leaving it there in the rain you shall carry it three days without assistance or relief!" said Ranjoor Singh. "Get back to your place in the ranks!"

And the man got back, saying nothing. Ranjoor Singh picked up the baggage and tossed it past Tugendheim into the hut.

"That is all I have!" said Tugendheim.

"If you decide to burn, it shall burn with you," said Ranjoor Singh, "and that trooper shall carry a good big stone instead to teach him manners!"

"*Gott in himmel!*" said Tugendheim, losing self-command at last. "Can I offer what I have not got?"

"Is there nothing you can do?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"In what way? How?" asked the German.

"In the way of making amends to us Sikhs for all those lies you have been party to," said Ranjoor Singh. "If you were willing to offer to make amends, I would listen to you."

"I will do anything in reason, said Tugendheim, looking him full in the eye and growing more at ease.

"I am a reasonable man," said Ranjoor Singh.

"Then, speak!" said Tugendheim.

"Nay, nay!" said Ranjoor Singh, "it is for you to make proposals, and not for me. It is not I who stand waiting to be burned alive! Let me make you a suggestion, however. What had we Sikhs to offer when we were prisoners in Germany?"

"Oh, I see!" said Tugendheim. "You mean you wish me to join you—to be one of you?"

"I mean," said Ranjoor Singh, "that if you were to apply to be allowed to join this regiment for a while, and to be allowed to serve us in a certain manner, we would consider the proposal. Otherwise—is my meaning clear?"

"Yes!" said Tugendheim.

"Then—?" said Ranjoor Singh.

"I apply!" said Tugendheim; and at that moment the daffadar and his men returned with some more straw they had found in

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another tumble-down hut. They had it stuffed under their overcoats to keep it dry.

"Too late!" said Tugendheim with a grimace, but Ranjoor Singh bade them throw the straw inside for all that.

"In Germany we were required to set our names to paper," he said, and Tugendheim looked him in the eyes again for a full half-minute.

"Do you expect better conditions than were offered us?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"I will sign!" said Tugendheim.

"What will you sign?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"Anything in reason," answered Tugendheim.

"Let me tell you what I have here, then," said Ranjoor Singh, and he groped in his inner pocket for a paper, that he brought out very neatly folded, sheltering it from the rain under his cape.

"This," said he, "is signed by the Turkish captain and mate of that sunken steamer. It is a receipt for all our money, to be taken and divided equally between you —mentioned by name—and them—mentioned also by name, on condition that the ship be sunk and we be let go. If you will sign the paper—here—above their signatures—it will entitle you to one-third of all that money. They would neither of them dare to refuse to share with you!"

"What if I refuse to sign?" asked Tugendheim, making a great savage wrench to free his wrists, but failing.

"The suggestion is yours," said Ranjoor Singh. "You have only your own judgment for a guide."

"If I sign it will you let me go?" he asked.

"No," said Ranjoor Singh, "but we will not burn you alive if you sign. Here is a fountain-pen. Your hands shall be loosed when you are ready."

Tugendheim nodded, so I went and cut his hands loose; and when I had chafed his wrist for a minute or two he was able to write on my shoulder, I bending forward and Ranjoor Singh watching like a hawk lest he tear the paper. But he made no effort to play tricks.

When Ranjoor Singh had folded the paper again he said:

"Those two Turks quite understood that you were to be asked to sign as well. In fact, if there is any mishap they intend to lay all the blame on you. But it is to their interest as much as yours to keep us from being captured."

"You mean I'm to help you escape?" asked Tugendheim.

"Exactly!" said Ranjoor Singh. "Now that you have signed that, I am willing to bargain with you. We intend to find *Wassmuss*."

Tugendheim pricked up his ears and began to look almost willing.

"We have heard of this *Wassmuss*, and have taken quite a fancy to him. Your friends proposed to send us to the trenches, but we have already had too much of that work and we intend to find *Wassmuss* and take part with him. Let your business be to obey me implicitly and to help us reach *Wassmuss*, and on the day we reach our goal you shall go free with this paper given back to you. Disobey me, and you shall sample unheard-of methods of repentance! Do we understand each other?"

"I understand you!" said Tugendheim.

"I, too, wish to understand," said Ranjoor Singh.

"It is a bargain," said Tugendheim.

But I noticed they did not shake hands after European fashion, although I think Tugendheim would have been willing. He was a hearty man in his way, given to bullying, but also to quick forgetfulness; and I will say this much for him, that although he was ever on the lookout for some way of breaking his agreement, he kept it loyally enough while a way was lacking. I have met men I liked less.

It was growing by that time to be very nearly dawn, and the weather did not improve. The rain came down in squalls and sheets and the wind screamed through it, and we were famished as well as wet to the skin—all, that is to say, except Tugendheim, who had enjoyed the shelter of the hut. The teeth of many of the men were chattering. Yet we stood about for half an hour yet, because it was too dark and too dangerous to march over unknown ground. I suspect Ranjoor Singh did not dare squander what little spirit the men had left; if they had suspected him of losing them in the dark they might have lost heart altogether.

But at last there grew a little cold color in the sky and the sea took on a shade of gray. Then Ranjoor Singh told off the same four men who had first arrested him to guard our prisoner by day and night, taking turns to pretend to be his servant,

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with orders to give instant alarm should his movements seem suspicious. After that Tugendheim was searched, but nothing of interest being found on him his money and various little things were given back.

"Had he no pistol?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"Yes," said I, "but I took it when we bound and gagged him on the steamer." And I drew it out and showed it, feeling proud, never having had such a weapon—for the law of British India is strict.

"Why did you not tell me?" he asked, and I was silent. "Give it here!" said he, and I gave it up.

He examined it, drew out the cartridges, and passed it to Tugendheim, who pocketed it with a laugh. It was three days before he spoke to Tugendheim and caused him to give me the pistol back. I think the men were impressed, and I was glad of it, although at the time I felt ashamed.

Presently Ranjoor Singh himself chose an advance-guard of twenty men and put me in command of it.

"March eastward," he ordered me. "According to my map you should find a road within a mile or two running about northeast and southwest; turn to the left along it. Halt if you see armed men, and send back word. Keep a lookout for food, for the men are starving, but loot nothing without my order! March!" said he.

"May I ask a question, sahib?" said I, still lingering.

"Ask," said he.

"Would you truly have burned the German alive?" said I; and he laughed.

"That would have been a big fire," said he. "Do you think none would have come to investigate?"

"That is what I was thinking," said I.

"Do such thoughts burn your brain?" said he. "A threat to a bully—to a fool folly—to a drunkard drink—to each his own! Be going now!"

So I saluted him and led away, wondering in my heart, the weather growing worse if that were possible, but my spirits rising. I knew now that my back was toward Gallipoli, where the nearest British were, yet my heart felt bold with love for Ranjoor Singh and I did not doubt we would strike a good blow yet for our friends, although I had no least idea who *Wassmuss* was, nor whither we were marching. If I had known —eh, but listen, sahib!—this is a tale of tales!

CHAPTER V

If a man stole my dinner, I might let him run; but if he stole my horse, he and I and death would play hide and seek!

THAT dawn, sahib, instead of lessening, the rain-storm grew into a deluge that saved us from being seen. As I led my twenty men forward I looked back a time or two, and once I could dimly see steamers and some smaller boats tossing on the sea. Then the fiercest gust of rain of all swept by like a curtain, and it was as if Europe had been shut off forever—so I recalled Gooja Singh's saying on the transport in the Red Sea, about a curtain being drawn and our not returning that way. My twenty men marched numbly, some seeming half-asleep.

By and by, with heels sucking in the mud, we came to the road of which Ranjoor Singh had spoken and I turned along it. It had been worn into ruts and holes by heavy traffic and now the rain made matters worse, so we made slow progress. But before long I was able to make out dimly through the storm what looked like a railway station. There was a line of telegraph poles, and where it crossed our road there were buildings enough to have contained two regiments. I could see no sign of men, but in that light with rain swirling hither and thither it was difficult to judge. I halted, and sent a man back to warn Ranjoor Singh.

We blew on our fingers and stamped to keep life in ourselves, until at the end of ten minutes he came striding out of the rain like a king on his way to be crowned. My twenty were already speechless with unhappiness and hunger, but he had instilled some of his own spirit into the rest of the regiment for they marched with a swing in good order. He had Tugendheim close beside him and had inspired him too.

It may be the man was grinning in hope of our capture within an hour, and in that case he was doomed to disappointment. He was destined also to see the day when he should hope for our escape. But from subsequent acquaintance with him I think he was appreciating the risk we ran and Ranjoor Singh's great daring. I say this for Tugendheim, that he knew and respected resolution when he saw it.

When I had pointed out what I could see of the lay of the land Ranjoor Singh left

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me in charge and marched away with Tugendheim and Tugendheim's four guards. I looked about for shelter, but there was none. We stood shivering, the rain making pools at our feet that spread and became one. So I made the men mark time and abused them roundly for being slack about it, they grumbling greatly because our prisoner was marched away to shelter whereas we must stand without.

I bullied them as much as I dared and we stamped the road into a veritable quagmire, as builders tread mud for making sun-dried bricks, so that when three-quarters of an hour had passed and a man came running back with a message from Ranjoor Singh there was a little warmth in us. I did not need to use force to get the column started.

"Come!" said the trooper. "There is food, and shelter, and who knows what else!"

So we went best foot first along the road, feeling less than half as hungry and not weak at all now that we knew food was almost within reach. Truly a man's desires are the vainest part of him. Less hungry we were at once, less weary, and vastly less afraid; yet too much in a hurry to ask questions of the messenger!

Ranjoor Singh came out of a building to meet us, holding up his hand, so I made the men halt and began to look about. It was certainly a railway station, with a long platform, and part of the platform was covered by a roof. Parallel to that was a great shed with closed sides, and through its half-open door I could smell hay—a very good smell, sahib, warming to the heart. To our right, across what might be called a yard—thus—were many low sheds, in one there were horses feeding; in others I could see Turkish soldiers sprawling on the straw, but they took no notice of us. Three of the low sheds were empty, and Ranjoor Singh pointed to them.

"Let all except twenty men," said he, "go and rest in those sheds. If any one asks questions, say only "Allah!" So they will think you are Mohammedans. If that should not seem sufficient, say "*Wassmuss!*" But unless questioned many times, say nothing. As you value your lives, say nothing more than those two words to any one at all. Rather be thought fools than be hanged before breakfast!"

So all but twenty of the men went and lay down on straw in the three empty sheds, and I took the twenty and followed him into the great shed with closed sides. Therein, besides many other things, we beheld great baskets filled with loaves of bread—not very good bread, nor at all fresh, but staff of life itself to hungry men. He bade the men count out four loaves for each and every one of us, and then at last he gave me a little information.

"The Germans in Stamboul," he said "talked too loud of this place in my hearing." I stood gnawing a loaf already, and I urged him to take one, but he would eat nothing until all the men should have been fed. "They detrain Dervish troops at this point," said he, "and march them to the shore to be shipped to Gallipoli, because they riot and make trouble if kept in barracks in Skutari or Stamboul. This bread was intended for two train-loads of them."

"Then the Dervishes will riot after all!" said I, and he laughed—a thing he does seldom.

"The sooner the better!" said he. "A riot might cover up our tracks even better than this rain."

"Is there no officer in charge here?" I asked him.

"Aye, a Turkish officer," said he. "I heard the Germans complain about his inefficiency. A day or two later and we might have found a German in his place. He mistakes us for friends. What else could we be?" And he laughed again.

"But the telegraph wire?" said I

"Is down," he said, "both between here and Skutari, and between here and Inismid. God sent this storm to favor us, and we will praise God by making use of it."

"Where is Tugendheim?" said I, but it was some minutes before he answered me, for, since the loaves were counted he went to see them distributed, and I followed him.

"Tugendheim," he said at last, "has driven the Turkish officer to seek refuge in seclusion! I used the word *Wassmuss*, and that had effect; but Tugendheim's insolence was our real passport. Nobody here doubts that we are in full favor at Stamboul. *Wassmuss* can keep for later on."

"Sahib," said I, seeing he was in good humor, "tell me of this *Wassmuss*."

"All in good time!" he answered.

And when he has decided it is not yet time to answer it is wisest to be still. After fifteen or twenty minutes with the men I

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followed him across the yard and entered the station waiting-room—a pretentious place, with fancy bronze handles on the doors and windows.

Lo, there sat Tugendheim, with both hands deep in his pockets and a great cigar between his teeth. His four guards stood with bayonets fixed making believe to wait on him, but in truth watching him as caged wolves eye their dinner. Ranjoor Singh was behaving almost respectfully toward him, which filled me with disgust; but presently I saw and understood. There was a little window through which to sell tickets, and down in one corner of it the frosting had been rubbed from off the glass.

"There is an eye," said I in an undertone, "that I could send a bullet through without difficulty!"

But Ranjoor Singh called me a person without judgment and turned his back.

"When do we start?" asked Tugendheim.

"When the men have finished eating," he answered, and at that I stared again, for I knew the men's mood and did not believe it possible to get them away without a long rest, nor even in that case without argument.

"What if they refuse?" said I.

Ranjoor Singh faced about to look at me.

"Do you refuse?" he asked. "Go and warn them to finish eating and be ready to march in twenty minutes!"

So I went, and delivered the message, and it was as I had expected, only worse.

"So those are his words? What are words!" said they. "Ask him whither he would lead us!" shouted Gooja Singh.

He had been talking in whispers with a dozen men at the rear of the middle hut.

"If I take him such dog's answers," said I, "he will dismiss me and there will no more be a go-between."

"Go, take him this message," shouted Gooja Singh. "But for his sinking of our ship we should now be among friends in Gallipoli! Could we not have seized another ship and plundered coal? Tell him, therefore, if he wishes to lead us he must use judgment. Are we leaves blown hither and thither for his amusement? Nay! We belong to the British Army! Tell him we will march toward Gallipoli or nowhither! We will march until opposite Gallipoli, and search for some means of crossing!

"I will take that as Gooja Singh's message," said I.

"Nay, nay!" said he. "That is the regiment's message!" And the dozen men with whom he had been whispering nodded acquiescence.

"Is Gooja Singh the regiment?"

"No," said he, "but I am *of* the regiment. I am not a man running back and forth, false to both sides!"

I was not taken by surprise. Something of that sort sooner or later I knew must come, but I would have preferred another time and place.

"Be thou go-between, then, Gooja Singh!" said I. "I accepted only under strong persuasion. Gladly I relinquish! Go thou, and carry thy message to Ranjoor Singh!" And I sat down in the entrance of the middle hut, as if greatly relieved of heavy burdens. "I have finished!" I said. "I am not even daffadar! I will request reduction to the ranks!"

For about a minute I sat while the men stared in astonishment. Then they began to rail at me, but I shook my head. They coaxed me, but I refused. Presently they begged me, but I took no notice.

"Let Gooja Singh be your messenger!" said I. And at that they turned on Gooja Singh, and some of them went and dragged him forward, he resisting with arms and feet. They set him down before me.

"Say the word," said they, "and he shall be beaten!"

So I got on my feet again and asked whether they were soldiers or monkey-folk, to fall thus suddenly on one of their number, and he a superior. I bade them loose Gooja Singh, and I laid my hand on his shoulder, helping him to his feet.

"Are we many men with many troubles, or one regiment?" said I.

At that most of them grew ashamed, and those who had assaulted Gooja Singh began to make excuses, but he went back to the rear to the men who had whispered with him. They drew away, and he sat in silence apart, I rejoicing secretly at his discomfiture but fearful nevertheless.

"Now!" said I. "Appoint another man to wait on Ranjoor Singh!"

But they said:

"Nay! We will have none but you. You have done well—we trust you—we are content!"

I made much play of unwillingness, but allowed them to persuade me in the end, yielding a little at a time and gaining ever new protestations of their loyalty, until

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at last I let them think they had convinced me.

"Nevertheless," said they, "tell Ranjoor Singh he must lead us toward Gallipoli!"

They were firm on that point.

SO I went back to the waiting-room and told Ranjoor Singh all that had happened, omitting nothing, and he stood breaking pieces from a loaf of bread with his fingers, not burying his teeth into the loaf as most of us had done. He asked me the names of the men who had so spoken and I told him, he repeating them and considering each name for a moment or two.

"Have they finished eating?" he asked at last, and I told him they had as good as finished. So he ate his own bread faster.

"Come," he ordered presently, beckoning to Tugendheim and the four guards.

It was raining as hard as ever as we crossed the station yard, and the men had excuse enough for disliking to turn out. Yet they scented development, I think, and none refused although they fell in just not sullenly enough to call for reprimand. Ranjoor Singh drew the roll from his inner pocket and they all answered to their names. Then, without referring to the list again, he named those who I had told him used high words to me, beginning at Gooja Singh and omitting none.

"Fall out!" he ordered. And when they had obeyed, glaring at me who had but done their bidding. "Fall in again over there on the left!"

There were three-and-twenty of them, Gooja Singh included, and they wondered greatly. He caused them to fall in at right angles to us, so that we could hear as well as they. Then as he cleared his throat I recognized again the old manner that had made a squadron love him to the death at home in India—the manner of a man with good legs under him and no fear in his heart.

"Am I to be herdsman, then?" said he, pitching his voice against wind and rain. "Are ye men—or animals? Hunted animals would have known enough to eat and hurry on. Hunted animals would be wise enough to run in the direction least expected. Hunted animals would take advantage of ill weather to put distance between them and their foe. Some of you, then, must be less than animals! Men I can lead. Animals I can drive. But what shall be done with such less-than-animals as can neither be led nor driven?"

Then he turned about half-left to face the three-and-twenty, and stood as it were waiting for their answer, with one hand holding the other wrist behind his back. And they stood shifting feet and looking back at him, extremely ill-at-ease.

"What is the specific charge against us?" asked Gooja Singh, for the men began to thrust him forward. But Ranjoor Singh preferred to bring no charge just then.

"You have leave," said he, "to take one box of cartridges and go! Gallipoli lies that way!" And he pointed through the rain.

Then the two-and-twenty began at once abusing Gooja Singh, he trying to refute them, and Ranjoor Singh watching them all with a feeling, I thought, of pity. Tugendheim, trying to make the ends of his mustaches stand upright in the rain, laughed as if he thought it a very great joke; but the rest of the men looked doubtful. I knew they were unwilling to turn their backs on any of our number, yet not desirous of forcing an issue, for Ranjoor Singh had them in a quandary. I thought perhaps I might mediate.

"Sahib," said I.

"Silence!" he ordered. So I stepped back to my place, and a dozen men laughed at me, for which I vowed vengeance. Later when my wrath had cooled I knew I should have approved their laughter, though offensive to me, for a good sign on the whole. When my chance came I did not take vengeance on them, although I was careful to reassert my dignity.

After much argument Gooja Singh turned his back at last on the two-and-twenty and saluted Ranjoor Singh with great sign of respect.

"Sahib," said he, "we have no wish to go one way and you another. We be of the regiment."

"Ye have set yourselves up to be dictators Ye have used wild words. Ye have tried to seduce the rest. Ye have my leave to go!" said Ranjoor Singh.

"Nay!" said Gooja Singh. "We will not go! We follow the regiment!"

"Will ye follow like dogs that pick up offal, then?" he asked. And Gooja Singh said:

"Nay! We be no dogs, but true men.

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We be faithful to the salt! Sahib," said he, "we be sorry we offended. We be true men—true to the salt."

Now that was the truth. Their fault had lain in not believing their officer at least as faithful as they and ten times wiser. Every man in the regiment knew it was truth, and for all that the rain poured down in torrents, obscuring vision, I could see that the general feeling was swinging all one way. If I had dared I would have touched Ranjor Singh's elbow, and have whispered to him. But I did not dare. Nor was there need. The instant he spoke again I knew he saw clearer than I.

"Ye speak of the salt?" said he.

"Aye!" said Gooja Singh. "Aye, sahib! In the name of God be good to us! Whom else shall we follow?"

"Aye, sahib!" said the others. "Put us to the test!"

The lined-up regiment, that had been standing rigid, not at attention but with muscles tense, now stood easier, and it might have been a sigh that passed among them.

"Then until I release you for good behavior, you three-and-twenty shall be ammunition-bearers," said Ranjoor Singh. "Give over your rifles for other men to carry. Each two men take a box of cartridges. Swiftly now!" said he.

So they gave up their rifles, which in itself was proof enough that they never intended harm but were only misled by Gooja Singh and the foolishness of their own words. And they picked up the cartridge boxes, leaving Gooja Singh standing alone by the last one. He made a wry face.

"Who shall carry this?" said he, and Ranjoor Singh laughed.

"My rank is daffadar!" said Gooja Singh.

Ranjoor Singh laughed again.

"I will hold court-martial and reduce you to the ranks whenever I see the need!" said he. "For the present you shall teach a new kind of lesson to the men you have misled. They toil with ammunition boxes. You shall stride free!"

Gooja Singh had handed his rifle to me, and I passed it to a trooper. He stepped forward now to regain it with something of a smirk on his fat lips.

"Nay, nay!" said Ranjoor Singh with another laugh. "No rifle, Gooja Singh! Be herdsman without honor! If one man is lost on the road you shall be sent back alone to look for him! Herd them, then, drive them, as you value peace!"

There being then one box to be provided for he chose eight strong men to take turns with it, each two to carry for half-an-hour; and that these might know there was no disgrace attached to their task they were placed in front, to march as if they were the band. Nor was Gooja Singh allowed to march last, as I expect he had hoped; he and his twenty-two were set in the midst where they could eat shame and the precious ammunition would be under the eyes of half the regiment. Then Ranjoor Singh raised his voice again.

"To try to reach Gallipoli," he said, "would be as wise as to try to reach Berlin! Both shores are held by Turkish troops under German officers. We found the one spot where it was possible to slip through undetected. We must make the most of that. Moreover, if they refuse to believe we were drowned last night they will look for us in the direction of Gallipoli, for all the German officers in Stamboul knew how your hearts burned to go thither. It was a joke among them! Let it be our business to turn the joke on them! There will be forced marches now—long, hungry ones—form fours!" he ordered. "By the right—Quick march!"

And we wheeled away into the rain, he marching on the flank. I ran and overtook him.

"Take a horse, sahib!" I urged. "See them in the shed! Take one and ride, for it is more fitting!"

"Better plunder and burn!" said he. "If a man stole my dinner I might let him run; but if he stole my horse, he and I and death would play hide-and-seek! We need forgetfulness, not angry memories behind us! Keep thou a good eye on Tugendheim!"

So I fell to the rear, where I could see all the men, Tugendheim included. In a very few minutes we had lost the station buildings in the rain behind us and then Ranjoor Singh began to lead in a wide semi-circle, so that before long I judged we were marching about southeastward. At the end of an hour or so he changed direction to due east, and presently we saw another telegraph line. I overtook him again and suggested that we cut it.

"Nay!" said he. "If that line works and we are not believed drowned, too many telegrams will have been sent already! To cut it would give them our exact position!

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—Otherwise—why make trouble and perhaps cause pursuit?"

So we marched under the telegraph wire and took a course about parallel to it. At noon it ceased raining and we rested, eating the bread of which every man had brought away three loaves. After that, what with marching and the wind and sun our clothes began to dry and we became more cheerful—all, that is to say, except the ammunition-bearers, who abused Gooja Singh with growing fervency. Yet he was compelled to drive them lest he himself be court-martialed and reduced to the ranks.

CHEERFULNESS and selfishness are often one, sahib, for it was not what we could see that raised our spirits. We marched by village after village that had been combed by the foragers for Turkish armies, and saw only destitution to right and left, behind and before. The only animals we saw were dead ones, except the dogs hunting for bones that might have marrow in them still.

We saw no men of military age. Only very old men were left, and but few of those; they and the women and children ran away at sight of us, except a very few who seemed careless from too much misery. One such man had a horse, covered from head to foot with sores, that he offered to sell to Ranjoor Singh. I did not overhear what price he asked, but I heard the men scoffing at such avarice as would rob vultures. He went away saying nothing, like a man in a stupor, leaving the horse to die. Nay, sahib, he had not understood their words.

We slept that first night in a village whose one street was a quagmire and a cesspool. There was no difficulty in finding shelter because so many of the houses were deserted; but the few inhabitants of the other houses could not be persuaded to produce food. Ranjoor Singh took their money away from the four men whom I had overlooked when we all gave up our money on the steamer, and with that, and Tugendheim for extra argument, he went from house to house.

Tugendheim used no tenderness, such being not his manner of approach, but nothing came of it. They may have had food hidden, but we ate stale bread and gave them some of it, although Ranjoor Singh forbade us when he saw what we were doing. He thought I had not been looking when he gave some of his own to a little one.

We were up and away at dawn, with all the dogs in Asia at our heels. They smelled our stale bread and yearned for it. It was more than an hour before the last one gave up hope and fell behind. They are hard times, sahib, when the street dogs are as hungry as those were.

Hunger! We met hunger day after day for eight days—hunger and nothing else, although it was good enough land—better than any I have seen in the Punjab. There was water everywhere. The air too was good to breathe, tempting us to fill our lungs and march like new men, yet causing appetite we could not assuage. We avoided towns, and all large villages, Ranjoor Singh consulting his map whenever we halted, and marching by the little compass the Germans had given him.

We should have seen sheep or goats or cattle had there been any; but there were none. Utterly not one! And we Sikhs are farmers, not easily deceived on such matters; we knew that to be grazing land we crossed. It was a land of fruit, too, in the proper season. There had been cattle by the thousand, but they were all gone—plundered by the Turks to feed their armies.

Ranjoor Singh did his best to make us husband our stale loaves, but we ate the last of them and became like famished wolves. Some of us grew footsore, for we had German boots to which our feet were not yet thoroughly accustomed; but he gave us no more rest than he needed for his own refreshment—and that was wonderfully little. We had to nurse and bandage our feet as best we could, and march—march—march!

He had a definite plan, for he led unhesitatingly, but he would not tell us the plan. He was stern when we begged for longer rests, merciless toward the ammunition-bearers, silent at all times unless compelled to give orders or correct us. Most of the time he kept Tugendheim marching beside him, and Tugendheim, I think, began to regard him with quite peculiar respect; for he admired resolution.

Most of us felt that our last day of marching was upon us, for we were ready to drop, when we skirted a village at about noon of the eighth day and saw in the distance a citadel perched on a rocky hill above the skyline. We were on flat land, but there was a knoll near and to that Ranjoor Singh led us and there he let us lie. He, weary as

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we but better able to overcome, drew out his map and spread it, weighting the four corners with stones; and he studied it chin on hand for about five minutes, we watching him in silence.

"That," said he, standing at last and pointing toward the distant citadel, "is Angora. Yonder"—he made a sweeping motion—"runs the railway, whose terminus is at Angora. There are many long roads hereabouts, so that the place has become a depot for food and stores that the Turks plunder and the Germans dispatch over the railway to the coast. The railway has been taken over by the Germans."

"Are we to storm the town?" asked a trooper, and fifty men mocked him.

But Ranjoor Singh looked down kindly at him and gave him a word of praise.

"No, my son," he said. "Yet if all had been stout enough to ask that, I would have dared attempt it! No, we are perhaps a little desperate, but not yet so desperate as that."

He began sweeping the horizon with his eyes, quartering the countryside mile by mile, overlooking nothing. I saw him watch the wheeling kites and look below them, and twice I saw him fix his gaze for minutes at a time on one place.

"We will eat tonight!" he said at last. "Sleep," he ordered, "lie down and sleep until I summon you!" But he called me to his side and kept me wakeful for a while yet.

"Look yonder," said he. And when I gazed for about two minutes I was aware of a column of men and animals moving toward the city. A little enough column.

"How fast are they moving?" he asked me, and I gazed for several minutes, reaching no decision. I said they were too far away, and coming too much toward us for their speed to be accurately judged. Yet I thought they moved slowly.

Said he:

"Do you see that hollow—one, two, three miles this side of them?" And I answered yes. "That is a bend of the river that flows by the city," said he. "There is water there, and firewood. They have come far and are heading toward it. They are too far spent to reach Angora before night. They will not try. That is where they will camp."

"Sahib," I said, considering his words as a cook tastes curry, "our men be over-weary to have fight in them."

"Who spoke of fighting?" said he.

So I went and lay down, and fell asleep wondering. When he came and roused me it was already growing late. By the time I had roused the men and they were all lined up we could no longer see Angora for the darkness; which worked both ways—those in Angora could not see us.

"If any catch sight of us," said Ranjoor Singh, speaking in a loud voice to us all, "let us hope they mistake us for friends. What Turk or German looks for an enemy hereabouts? The chances are all ours, but beware! Be silent as ye know how! Forward!"

It was a pitiable effort, for our bellies yearned and our feet were sore and stiff. We stumbled from weariness, and men fell and were helped up again. Gooja Singh and his ammunition-bearers made more noise than a squadron of mounted cavalry, and the way proved twice as long as the most hopeless had expected. Yet we made the circuit unseen and, so far as we knew, unheard—certainly unchallenged. Doubtless, as Ranjoor Singh said afterwards, the Turks were too overridden by Germans and the Germans too overconfident to suspect the presence of an enemy.

At any rate, although we made more noise than was expedient we halted at last among low bushes and beheld nine or ten Turkish sentries posted along the rim of a rise, all unaware of us. Two were fast asleep. Some sat. The others drowsed leaning on their rifles. Ranjoor Singh gave us whispered orders and we rushed them, only one catching sight of us in time to raise an alarm. He fired his rifle, but hit nobody, and in another second they were all surrounded and disarmed.

Then, down in the hollow we saw many little camp-fires, each one reflected in the water. Some Turks and about fifty men of another nation sat up and rubbed their eyes, and a Turkish captain—an upstanding, flabby man, came out from the only tent to learn what the trouble might be. Ranjoor Singh strode down into the hollow and enlightened him, we standing around the rim of the rise with our bayonets fixed and rifles at the "ready." I did not hear what Ranjoor Singh said to the Turkish captain because he left me to prevent the men from stampeding toward the smell of food—no easy task.

After five minutes he shouted for

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Tugendheim and the German went down the slope, visibly annoyed by the four guards who kept their bayonets within a yard of his back. It was a fortunate circumstance for us, not only then but very many times, that Tugendheim would have thought himself disgraced by appealing to a Turk. Seeing there was no German officer in the hollow he adopted his arrogant manner, and the Turkish officer drew back from him like a man stung. After that the Turkish captain appeared to resign himself to impotence for he ordered his men to pile arms, and retired into his tent.

Then Ranjoor Singh came up the slope and picked the twenty men who seemed least ready to drop with weariness, of whom I regretted to be one. He set us on guard; where the Turkish sentries had been, and the Turks were sent below, where presently they fell asleep among their brethren as weary no doubt from plundering as we were from marching on empty bellies. None of them seemed at all sorry to be disarmed.

Then all the rest of the men, daffadars no whit behind the rest, swooped down on the camp-fires, and presently the smell of toasting corn began to rise, until my mouth watered and my belly yearned. Fifteen or twenty minutes later—it seemed like twenty hours, sahib!—hot corn was brought to us and we on guard began to be new men. Nevertheless, food made the guard more sleepy, and I was hard put to it walking from one to another keeping them awake.

ALL that night I knew nothing of what passed in the camp below, but I learned later on that Ranjoor Singh found among the Syrians, whose business was to load and drive carts, a man named Abraham. All in the camp who were not Turks were Syrians, and these Syrians had been dragged away from their homes scores of leagues away and made to labor without remuneration. This Abraham was a gifted man, who had been in America, and knew English, as well as several dialects of Kurdish, and Turkish and Arabic and German. He knew better German than English, and had frequently been made to act interpreter. Later, when we marched together, he and I became good friends, and he told me many things.

Well, sahib, after he had eaten a little corn, Ranjoor Singh questioned this man Abraham, and then went with him through the camp examining the plunder the Turks had seen fit to requisition. It was plain that this particular Turkish officer was no paragon of all the virtues, and Ranjoor Singh finally entered his tent taking Abraham with him. So it was that I learned the details later, for Abraham told me all I asked!

On a box beside the bed Ranjoor Singh found writing paper, envelopes, and requisition forms not yet filled out but already signed with a seal and a Turkish signature. There was a map, and a list of routes and villages. But best of all was a letter of instructions signed by a German officer. There were also other, priceless things, of some of which I may chance to speak later.

I was told by Abraham that during the conversation following Ranjoor Singh's seizure of the papers the word *Wassmuss* was bandied back and forth a thousand times, the Turk growing rather more amenable each time the word was used. Finally the Turk resigned himself with a shrug of the shoulders, and was left in his tent with a guard of our men at each corner.

Then, for all that the night was black dark and there were very few lanterns, the camp began to be turned upside down, Ranjoor Singh ordering everything thrown aside that could not be immediately useful to us. There were forty carts, burdened to the breaking point, and twenty of them Ranjoor Singh abandoned as too heavy for our purpose. Most of the carts had been drawn by teams of six mules each, but ten of them had been drawn by horses, and besides the Turkish captain's horse there were four other spare ones. There were also about a hundred sheep and some goats.

Ranjoor Singh ordered all the corn repacked into fourteen of the carts, sheep and goats into four carts, and ammunition into the remaining two, leaving room in each cart for two men so that the guard who had stood awake all night might ride and sleep. That left him with sixty-four spare horses. Leaving the Turkish officer his own horse but taking the saddle for himself, he gave Tugendheim one, me another, the third to Gooja Singh—he being next non-commissioned officer to me in order of seniority and having had punishment enough; and the fourth horse, that was much the best one, he himself took.

Then he chose sixty men to cease from being infantry and become a sort of cavalry

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again—cavalry without saddles as yet, or stirrups—cavalry with rifles—cavalry with aching feet—but cavalry none the less. He picked the sixty with great wisdom, choosing for the most part men who had given no trouble, but he included ten or twelve grumblers, although for a day or two I did not understand why. There was forethought in everything he did.

The sheep that could not be crowded into the carts he ordered butchered there and then, and the meat distributed among the men; and all the plunder that he decided not to take he ordered heaped in one place where it would not be visible unless deliberately looked for. The plundered money that he found in the Turk's tent he hid under the corn in the foremost cart, and we found it very useful later on. The few of our men who had not fallen asleep were for burning the piled up plunder, but he threatened to shoot whoever dared set match to it.

"Shall we light a beacon to warn the countryside?" said he.

A little after midnight there began to be attempts by Turkish soldiers to break through and run for Angora. But I had kept my twenty guards awake with threats of death, and of being made to carry ammunition—even letting the butt of my rifle do work not set down in the regulations. So it came about that we captured every single fugitive. They were five all told, and I sent them, tied together down to Ranjoor Singh. Thereupon he went to the Turk, and promised him personal punishment if another of his men made an attempt to break away. So the Turk gave orders that were obeyed.

Then, when all the plunder in the camp had been rearranged, and the mules and horses reapportioned, four hours yet before dawn, Ranjoor Singh took out his fountain pen and executed the stroke of genius that made what followed possible. Without Abraham I do not know what he would have done. I cannot imagine. Yet I feel sure he would have contrived something. He made use of Abraham as the best tool available, and that is no proof he could not have done as well by other means. I have learned this: that Ranjoor Singh with that faith of his in God can do anything. Anything. He is a true man, and God puts thoughts into his heart.

Among the Turk's documents were big sheets of paper for official correspondence, similar to that on which his orders were written. Ranjoor Singh ascertained from Abraham that he who had signed those orders was the German officer highest in command in all that region, who had left Angora a month previously to superintend the requisitioning.

So Ranjoor Singh sent for Tugendheim, whose writing would have the proper clerical appearance, and by a lantern in the tent dictated to him a letter in German to the effect that this Turkish officer, by name Nazim, with all his men and carts and animals had been diverted to the aid of *Wassmuss*. The letter went on to say that on his way back to Angora this same high German officer would himself cover the territory thus left uncared for, so that nothing need be done about it in the meanwhile —He wrote that to prevent investigation and perhaps pursuit by the men in Angora who awaited Nazim and his plunder.

At the foot of the letter Abraham cleverly copied the signature of the very high German officer, after making many experiments first on another sheet of paper.

Tugendheim of course protested vehemently that he would do no such thing when ordered to write. But Ranjoor Singh ordered the barrel of a Turkish soldier's rifle thrust in the fire, and the German did not protest to the point of permitting his feet to be singed. He wrote a very careful letter, even suggesting better phraseology—his reason for that being that, since he was thus far committed, our total escape would be the best thing possible for him. The Germans who are so fond of terrifying others are merciless to their own who happen to be guilty of weak conduct, and to have said he was compelled to write that letter would have been no excuse if we were caught. Henceforward it was strictly to his interest to help us.

Finally, when the letter had been sealed in its envelope, there came the problem of addressing it, and the Turk seemed ignorant on that point, or else stupid. Perhaps he was wilfully ignorant, hoping that the peculiar form of the address might cause suspicion and investigation. But what with Tugendheim's familiarity with German military custom, and Ranjoor Singh's swift thought an address was devised that served the purpose.

Then came the problem of delivering the letter. To have sent one of the Turkish

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soldiers with it would have been the same thing as marching to Angora and surrendering; for of course the Turk would have told of what happened in the night, and where it happened, and all about it. To have sent one of the half-starved Syrians would probably have amounted to the same thing; for the sake of a belly-full, or from fear of ill-treatment the wretched man would very likely tell too much. But Abraham was different. Abraham was an educated man, who well understood the value to us of silence, and who seemed to hate both Turks and Germans equally.

So Ranjoor Singh took Abraham aside and talked with him five minutes. And the end of that was that a Turkish soldier was compelled to strip himself and change clothes with Abraham, the Turk taking no pleasure at all in the exchange. Then Abraham was given a horse, and on the outside of the envelope in one corner was written in German "Bearer should be supplied with saddle for his horse and sent back at once with acknowledgement of receipt of this."

There and then Ranjoor Singh gave Abraham the letter, shook hands with him, helped him on the horse, and sent him on his way—three hours before dawn. Then promptly he gave orders to all the other Syrians to strike camp and resume their regular occupation of driving mules.

The Turkish officer, although not deprived of his horse, was not permitted to ride until after daybreak, because of the difficulty otherwise of guarding him in the dark. The same with Tugendheim; although there was little reason for suspecting him of wanting to escape, with that letter fresh in his memory, he was nevertheless compelled to walk until daylight should make escape impossible.

The Turkish officer was made to march in front with his four-and-forty soldiers, who were given back their rifles but no bayonets or ammunition. Gooja Singh, whose two-and-twenty were ready by that time to pull his beard out hair by hair, was given fifty men who hated him less fiercely and set to march next behind the Turks. Then came the carts in single column, and after them Tugendheim and the remainder of our infantry. Behind the infantry rode the cavalry, and very last of all rode Ranjoor Singh, since that was for the present the post of chiefest danger.

As for me, I tumbled into a cart and fell asleep at once, scarcely hearing the order shouted to the Turk to go forward. The men who had been on guard with me all did the same, falling asleep like me, almost before their bodies touched the corn.

WHEN I awoke it was already midday. We had halted near some trees and food was being served out. I got under the cart to keep the sun off me, and lay there musing until a trooper had brought my meal. The meal was good, and my thoughts were good—excellent! For had we not been a little troop of lean ghosts, looking for graves to lie in? The talk along the way had been of who should bury us, or who should bury the last man supposing we all died one by one! Had we not been famished until the very wind was a wall too heavy to prevail against?

And were we not now what the drill-book calls a composite force, with full bellies, carts, horses, and equipment? Who thought about graves any longer! I lay and laughed, sahib, until a trooper brought me dinner—laughed for contempt of the Germans we had left behind, and for the Turks whose plunder we had stolen—laughed like a fool, like a man without brain or experience or judgment.

Not until I had eaten my fill did I bethink me of Ranjoor Singh. Then I rose lazily, and was astonished at the stiffness in my ankles. Nevertheless I contrived to stride with military manner, in order that any Turk or Syrian beholding me might know me for a man to be reckoned with, the added pain and effort being well worth while.

Nor did I have far to look for Ranjoor Singh. The instant I raised my eyes I saw him sitting on a great rock beneath the shadow of a tree, with his horse tied below him eating corn from a cloth spread on the ground. In order to reach him with least inconvenience I made a circuit and approached from the rear, because in that direction the rock sloped away gradually and I was in no mood to climb, nor in condition to climb with dignity.

So it happened that I came on him unaware. Nevertheless, I was surprised that his ears should not detect my footfall. The horse, six feet below us, was aware of me first and snorted, yet Ranjoor Singh did not turn his head.

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"Sahib!" said I; but he did not move.

"Sahib!" I said, going a step nearer and speaking louder.

But he neither moved nor answered.

Now I knew there was no laughing matter, and my hand trembled as I held it out to touch his shoulder. His arms were folded above his knees and his chin rested on them. I shook him slightly, and his chin fell down between his knees; but he did not answer. Now I knew beyond doubt he was not asleep, for, however weary, he would ever awake at a touch or the lightest whisper. I began to fear he was dead, and a feeling of sickness swept over me as that grim fear took hold.

"Sahib!" I said again, taking his shoulders with both hands. And he toppled over toward me, thus, like a dead man. Yet he breathed. I made certain he was breathing.

I shook him twice or thrice, with no result. Then I took him in my arms, thus, one arm under the knees and one under his arm-pits, and lifted him. He is a heavy man, all bone and sinew, and my stiff ankles caused me agony; but I contrived to lay him gently full length in the shadow of the tree-trunk, and then I covered him with his overcoat, to keep away flies. I had scarcely finished that when Gooja Singh came, and I cursed under my breath; but openly I appeared pleased to see him.

"It is well you came!" said I. "Thus I am saved the necessity of sending one to bring you. Our sahib is asleep," I said, "and has made over the command to me until he shall awake again."

"He sleeps very suddenly!" said Gooja Singh. And he stood eying me with suspicion.

"Well he may!" said I, thinking furiously—as a man in a burning house—yet outwardly all calm. "He has done all our thinking for us all these days; he has borne alone the burden of responsibility. He has enforced the discipline," said I with a deliberate stare that made Gooja Singh look sullen, "and God knows how necessary that has been! He has let no littlest detail of the march escape him. He has eaten no more than we; he has marched as far and as fast as we; he has slept less than any of us. And now," said I, "he is weary. He kept awake until I came, and fell asleep in my arms when he had given me his orders."

Gooja Singh looked as if he did not believe me. But my words had been but a mask behind which I was thinking. As I spoke I stepped sideways, as if to prevent our voices from disturbing the sleeper, for it seemed wise to draw Gooja Singh to safer distance.

I sat down at last on the summit of the rock exactly where Ranjoor Singh was sitting when I spied him first, hoping that perhaps in his place his thoughts would come to me. And whether the place had anything to do with it I do not know, but certainly wise thoughts did come. I reached a decision in that instant that was the saving of us, and for which Ranjoor Singh greatly commended me later on. Because of it in the days to come he placed greater confidence in my ability and faithfulness and judgment.

"What were his orders?" asked Gooja Singh. "Or were they secret orders known only to him and thee?"

"If you had not come," said I, "I would have sent for you to hear the orders. When he wakes," I added, "I shall tell him who obeyed the swiftest."

I was thinking still. Thinking furiously. I knew nothing at all yet about Abraham, and that was good, for otherwise I might have decided to wait there for him to overtake us.

"Have the men finished eating?" I asked, and he answered he was come because they had finished eating.

"Then the order is to proceed at once!" said I. "Send a cart here under the rock and eight good men, that we may lower our sahib into it. With the exception of that one cart let the column proceed in the same order as before, the Turk and his men leading."

"Leading whither?" asked Gooja Singh.

"Let us hope," said I, "to a place where orders are obeyed in military manner without question! Have you heard the order?" I asked, and I made as if to go and wake our officer.

Without another word Gooja Singh climbed down from the rock and went about shouting his commands as if he himself were their originator. Meanwhile I thought busily, with an eye for the wide horizon, wondering whether we were being pursued, or whether telegrams had not perhaps been sent to places far ahead ordering Turkish regiments to form a cordon and cut us off.

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I wondered more than ever who *Wassmuss* might be, and whether Ranjoor Singh had had at any time the least idea of our eventual destination. I had no idea which direction to take. There was no track that I could see, except that made by our own cart-wheels. On what did I base my decision, then? I will tell you, sahib.

I saw that not only Ranjoor Singh's horse, but all the cattle had been given liberal amounts of corn. It seemed to me that unless he intended to continue by forced marches Ranjoor Singh would have begun by economizing food. Moreover, I judged that if he had intended resting many hours in that spot he would have had me summoned and have gone to sleep himself. The very fact that he had let me sleep on seemed to me proof that he intended going forward. Doubtless he would depend on me to stand guard during the night. So I reasoned it.

And I also thought it probable he had told the Turk in which direction to lead, seeing that the Turk doubtless knew more of that countryside than any. Ahead of us was all Asia and behind us was the sea. Who was I that I should know the way? But by telling the Turk to lead on I could impose on him responsibility for possible error, and myself gain more time to think. And for that decision too Ranjoor Singh saw fit to praise me later.

They brought the cart, and with the help of eight men I laid Ranjoor Singh very comfortably on the corn, and covered him. Then I bade those eight be bodyguard, letting none approach too close on pain of violence, saying that Ranjoor Singh needed a long deep sleep to restore his energy. Also I bade them keep that cart at the rear of the column, and I myself chose the rear place of all so as to keep control, prevent straggling, and watch against pursuit.

Pursued? Nay, sahib. Not at that time. Nevertheless that thought of mine, to choose the last place, was the very gift of God. We had been traveling about three parts of an hour when I perceived a very long way off the head of a camel caravan advancing at swift pace toward us—or almost toward us. It seemed to me to be coming from Angora. And it so happened that at the moment when I saw it first the front half of our column had already dipped beyond a rise and was descending a rather gentle slope.

I hurried the tail of the column over the rise by twisting it, as a man twists bullocks' tails. And then I bade the whole line halt and lie down, except those in charge of horses; them I ordered into the shelter of some trees, and the carts I hurried behind a low ridge—all except Ranjoor Singh's cart, that I ordered backed into a hollow near me. So we were invisible unless the camels should approach too close.

The Turks and Tugendheim I saw placed in the midst of all the other unmounted men, and ordered them guarded like felons; and I bade those in charge of mules and horses stand ready to muzzle their beasts with coats or what not, to prevent neighing and braying. Then I returned to the top of the rise and lay down, praying to God, with a trooper beside me who might run and try and shake Ranjoor Singh back to life in case of direst need.

I lay and heard my heart beat like a drum against the ground, praying one moment, and with the next breath cursing some hoof-beat from behind me and the muffled reprimand that was certain to follow it. The men were as afraid as I, and the thing I feared most of all was panic. Yet what more could I do than I had done? I lay and watched the camels, and every step that brought them nearer felt like a link in a chain that bound us all.

ONE thing became perfectly evident before long. There were not more than two hundred camels, and therefore in a fight we should be able to beat them off easily. But unless we could ambuscade them—and there was no time to prepare that now—it would be impossible to kill or capture them all. Some would get away, and those would carry the alarm to the nearest military post. Then gone would be all hope for us of evading capture or destruction. But it was also obvious to me that no such caravan would come straight on toward us at such speed if it knew of our existence or our whereabouts. They expected us as little as we had expected them.

So I lay still, trembling, wondering what Ranjoor Singh would say to me, supposing he did not die in the cart there—wondering what the matter might be with Ranjoor Singh—wondering what I should do supposing he did die and we escaped from this present predicament. I knew there was

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little hope of my maintaining discipline without Ranjoor Singh's aid. And I had not the least notion whither to lead, unless toward Russia.

Such thoughts made me physically sick, so that it was relief to turn from them and watch the oncoming caravan, especially as I began to suspect it would not come within a mile of us. Presently I began to be certain that it would cross our track rather less than a mile away. I began to whisper to myself excitedly. Then at last—

"Yes!" said I, out loud.

"Yes!" said a voice beside me, and I nearly jumped out of my skin. "Unless they suspect the track of our cart wheels and follow it up, we are all right!"

I looked around into the eyes of Ranjoor Singh, and felt my whole skin creep like a snake's at sloughing time!

"Sahib!" said I.

"You have done well enough," said he, "except that if attacked you would have had hard work to gather your forces and control them. But never mind, you did well enough for this first time!" said he.

"Sahib!" I said. "But I thought you were in a cart, dying!"

"In a cart, yes!" he said. "Dying, no—although that was no fault of somebody's!"

I begged him to explain, and while we watched the camels cross our track—God knows, sahib, why they did not grow suspicious and follow along it—he told me how he had sat on the great rock, not very sleepy but thinking, chin on knee, when suddenly some man crawled up from behind and struck him a heavy blow.

"Feel my head," said he, and I felt under his turban. There was a bruise the size of my folded fist. I swore—as who would not?

"Is it deep?" I said, still watching the camels, and before he answered me he sent the trooper to go and find his horse.

"Superficial," he said then. "By the favor of God but a water bruise. My head must have yielded beneath the blow."

"Who struck it?" said I, scarcely thinking what I said, for my mind was full of the camels, now flank toward us, that would have served our purpose like the gift of God could we only have contrived to capture them.

"How should I know?" he answered. "See—they pass within a half-mile of where I sat. Is not that the rock?"

And I said yes.

"Had you lingered there," he said, "word about us would have gone back to Angora at top camel speed. What possessed you to come away?"

"God!" said I, and he nodded, so that I began to preen myself.

He noticed my gathering self-esteem.

"Nevertheless," he said, aloud but as if talking to himself, yet careful that I should hear, "had this not happened to me I should have seen those camels on the skyline. Did you count the camels?"

"Two hundred and eight," said I.

"How many armed men with them?" he asked. "My eyes are dim from the blow yet."

"One hundred and four," said I, "and an officer or two."

He nodded.

"The prisoners would have been a nuisance," he said, "yet we might have used them later. What with camels and what with horses—and there is a good spot for an ambuscade through which they must pass presently—I went and surveyed it while they cooked my dinner—never mind, never mind!" said he. "If you had made a mistake it would have been disastrous. Yet—two hundred and eight camels would have been an acquisition—a great acquisition!"

So my self-esteem departed—like water from a leaky goatskin, and I lay beside him watching the last dozen camels cross our trail, the nose of one tied to the tail of another, one man to every two. I lay conjecturing what might have been our fate had I had cunning enough to capture that whole caravan, and not another word was spoken between us until the last man and two camels disappeared beyond a ridge. Then:

"Was there any man close by, when you found me?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"Nay, sahib," said I.

"Was there any man whose actions, or whose words gave ground for suspicion?" he asked.

"Nay, sahib," I began; but I checked myself, and he noticed it.

"Except—?" said he.

"Except that when Gooja Singh came," I said, "he seemed unwilling to believe you were asleep."

"How long was it before Gooja Singh came?" he asked.

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"He came almost before I had laid you under the tree and covered you," said I.

"And you told him I was asleep?" he said.

"Yes," said I; and at that he laughed silently, although I could tell well enough that his head ached, and merriment must have been a long way from him.

"Has Gooja Singh any very firm friend with us?" he asked, and I answered I did not know of one.

"The ammunition bearers who were his friends now curse him to his face," I said.

"Then he would have to do his own dirty work?" said he.

"He has to clean his own rifle," I answered. And Ranjoor Singh nodded.

Then suddenly his meaning dawned on me.

"You think it was Gooja Singh who struck the blow?" I asked.

We were sitting up by that time. The camels were out of sight. He rose to his feet and beckoned for his horse before he answered.

"I wished to know who else might properly be suspected," he said, taking his horse's bridle.

So I beckoned for my horse and ordering the cart in which he had lain to be brought along after us I rode at a walk beside him to where our infantry were left in hiding.

"Sahib," I said, "it is better after all to shoot this Gooja Singh. Shoot him on suspicion!" I urged. "He makes only trouble and ill will. He puts false construction on every word you or I utter. He misleads the men. And now you suspect him of having tried to kill you! Bid me shoot him, sahib, and I obey!"

"Who says I suspect him?" he answered. "Nay, nay, nay! I will have no murder done —no drum-head tyranny, fathered by the lees of fear! Let Gooja Singh alone!"

"Does your head not ache?" I asked him.

"More than you guess!" said he. "But my heart does not ache. Two aches would be worse than one. Come silently!"

So I rode beside him silently, and making a circuit and signaling to the watchers not to betray our presence we came on our hiding infantry unsuspected by them. We dismounted, and going close on foot were almost among them before any knew. Gooja Singh was on his feet in their midst, giving them information and advice.

"I tell you Ranjoor Singh is dead!" said he. "Hira Singh swears he is only asleep, but Hira Singh lies! Ranjoor Singh lies dead on top of the corn in the cart in yonder gully, and Hira Singh——"

I know not what more he would have said, but Ranjoor Singh stopped him. He stepped forward, smiling.

"Hira Singh, as you see, is alive," he said, "and if I am dead, then I must be the ghost of Ranjoor Singh come among you to enforce his orders! Rise!" he ordered. "Rise and fall in! Daffadars, make all ready to resume the march!"

"Shoot him, sahib!" I urged, taking out my pistol, that had once been Tugendheim's. "Shoot him, or let me do it!"

"Nay, nay!" he said laughing in my face, though not unkindly. "I am not afraid of him."

"But I, sahib!" I said. "I fear him greatly!"

"Yet thou and I be two men, and I command," he answered gently. "Let Gooja Singh alone."

So I went and grew very busy ordering the column. In twenty minutes we were under way, with a screen of horsemen several hundred yards ahead and another little mounted rearguard. But when the order had been given to resume the march and the carts were squeaking along in single file, I rode to his side again with a question. I had been thinking deeply, and it seemed to me I had the only answer to my thoughts.

"Tell me, sahib," I said. "Our nearest friends must be the Russians. How many hundred miles is it to Russia?"

But he shook his head and laughed again. "Between us and Russia lies the strongest of all the Turkish armies," he said. "We could never get through."

"I am a true man!" I said. "Tell me the plan!" But he only nodded, and rode on.

"God loves all true men," said he.

TO BE CONTINUED

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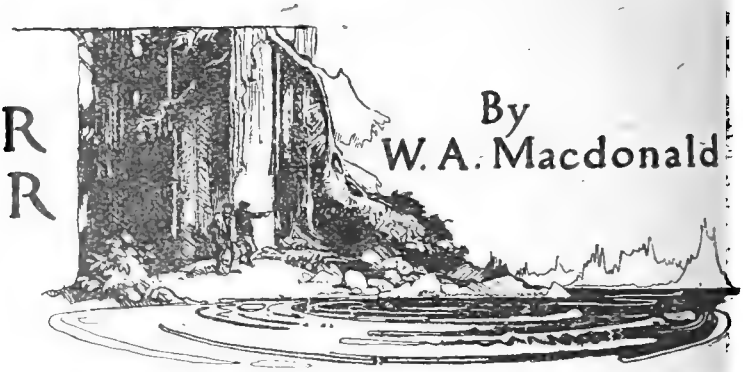
The WATER COVER



By W. A. Macdonald

Author of "The Cashier," and "The Night Rider"

LISTENING to the conversation, the dark-faced guide sneered evilly.

"The man across the lake appears to be traveling alone," remarked the rather corpulent Mr. Wendover to his sportsman companion, Sanderson.

"He doesn't look like a guide," commented Sanderson. "And, what's more, he doesn't act like a guide. Now you wouldn't imitate him by swimming in that lake at this time of year, would you, Pulaski?"

"I ain't no fool," sneered the guide. He looked up from the rifle he was oiling and passed his own comment on the man who had recently encamped across the little lake.

"It ain't safe to go in col' water like that without wool clothes on."

Wendover laughed good-naturedly. But there was something in Pulaski's tone that sharpened the glance which Sanderson shot at him. Sanderson's keenness in the business world that he habitually illuminated retained its edge on his vacations in the wilderness. Wendover was very easy-going. Being as much of a social person as Sanderson was a business man he followed his laugh with a characteristic suggestion:

"Say, Sanderson, let's drop over and pay him a call. A man traveling alone in these woods and going into a cold lake for his afternoon bath must be either wholly insane or entirely worth knowing."

Pulaski shifted uneasily, and Sanderson saw. This guide made him peculiarly uneasy of late.

"What's the code on such things, Jim?" Sanderson asked him. "Is it the proper thing to call on a man traveling alone?"

Pulaski hesitated. Then the plan that kindled in his quick mind spread a sinister spark to his eye. He shrugged.

"'S'all right," he replied, much interested in rubbing off some of the excess oil that shone thickly on the rifle breech.

"Come on then, Sanderson," urged Wendover. "Come on, Jim."

Sanderson came. But Jim shrugged his shoulders.

"Come when I get the gun finished up," he said.

He bent his head over his task. But under his dark brows his eyes glowed with a sullen fire as he watched the two sportsmen vanish into the forest toward the end of the lake. Like a graven image he sat until the last of their noisy progress was stilled.

Then he sprang into purposeful life. He loaded the rifle and laid it aside. He broke into the supply of ammunition with which these men from the city were amply supplied; he carefully chose his store of food; he selected his own ax with a glance of scorn at the nickel-plated blade guards on the sportsmen's implements; he gathered up coffee-pot and frying-pan, fastened the whole of his outfit when complete with the tump-line and laughed to himself to find the result so absurdly light when banded about his forehead. Stirring up the fire he made coffee and ate lightly. Finally he surveyed the camp with some satisfaction and gathered up his rifle and adjusted his burden. The sneer again curved his mouth and he turned and plunged into the timber toward the gleam that the sun made upon the little lake.

But Pulaski did not follow the trail of the men who had slanted off to the end of this lake. Instead he went directly toward the shore. But while still within concealment of the trees he stopped, eased his burden to the ground, examined his rifle carefully, went forward a few steps to where he could

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command a view of the water, here a mere hundred yards in breadth. At this point he piled a little heap of balsam boughs. Upon these he seated himself comfortably, rifle across his knees. He lit his pipe and, as the smoke curled up, he noticed with a sinister complacence above the tree-tops on the opposite shore the greater smoke that came from the camp-fire of the man who was traveling alone.

Jim Pulaski—wanted for murder, under another name. Here he sat, a thousand miles from the room where men had found the grisly result. Many a man had lost his trail since then. Here he sat with the look of an animal upon his face. The look of a fierce animal in desperate and deadly ambush for the one more enemy that its instinct apprises it is following. And, in this case, an enemy foolish enough to swim defenselessly within easy range.

Pulaski laughed contemptuously at such a foe. He had felt sure it was his enemy when he had seen the first smoke of this man's camp-fire. He had developed a wonderful sensitiveness toward pursuers. The law had given him some remarkable opportunities for the exercise of his instinct. Only one thing puzzled him now—that a pursuer like the man across the lake should be so careless as to expose himself unarmed to the marksmanship of his enemy. This must, of course, be well known to him.

Jim Pulaski had been briefly upset by the discrepancy between his instinct and his reason in this matter. Now his instinct, the instinct of the hunted, had triumphed. He would wait here for this man. If he should be vouchsafed the hitherto entirely unexpected luck of a pot-shot at his enemy swimming, well and good. If not, it was time anyway to shake these slow city woodsmen and travel free and light. He was merely minimizing his own danger. He fixed his gaze upon the opposite shore.

WHEN Wendover and Sanderson approached the camp-fire of their neighbor there was nobody in sight. Only the fire and the other signs of camp including a rifle leaning against a tree indicated man.

He spoke quietly from behind them.

"Hello"—almost as if he had been expecting them.

He was apparently unarmed. Both hands lay carelessly in the side pockets of his coat.

"Social call," smiled Sanderson, startled, but recovering.

Wendover's visiting bulk was all geniality.

"Mighty good to see some one beside one's guide," he laughed.

The stranger smiled. He was of a little more than middle height, lean of figure, economical of motion and quiet and pleasant of speech.

"Glad to see you," he welcomed them holding out a slender, muscular hand.

"You aroused our curiosity," said Sanderson. "Swimmers are not so common in these woods. To tell the truth, it's a good deal colder pond than I care to swim in."

The man laughed and fine wrinkles of good-humor deepened in his bronzed skin.

"Sit down," he invited. "Will you have some coffee? Will you stay to supper?"

"No, thanks," said Sanderson. "We're waiting for our guide to join us; then we're going back to camp. Come over with us."

They introduced themselves all 'round.

"My name's Taylor," said the stranger simply moving to put the coffee-pot over the fire.

There was a pause in the conversation while he performed this operation.

"Did you say your guide was coming over?" he inquired after a time.

"It's strange he hasn't come before this," said Sanderson, wrinkling his forehead.

"It is funny," agreed Wendover. "He said he was coming as soon as he finished cleaning that rifle."

Taylor knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

"I am tempted to walk over with you," he remarked. "But do you much mind waiting till I have had my swim?"

"Brr-r-r," shivered Wendover.

"Go ahead," smiled Sanderson. "We'll watch you."

They waited for Taylor in such a golden afternoon as sometimes comes into the Northern woods. Through the trees the sun was spinning its shining web, and the shadows were lengthening into the fantastic exaggerations that precede an early twilight. The forest was hushed except for the sleepy chirp of a little bird before its bedtime. A wonderful redolence of pine hung in the air. Sanderson found himself interestedly speculating upon the manner of man they had come here to see—his ease of manner, his self-possessed humor and an important something else that he could not define—a hardness beneath the pleasant manner, in-

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definable, but something like steel in a fine watch-spring.

Wendover was examining the coffee-pot to see if it contained another cup. It didn't. Wendover sighed.

"You haven't any newspapers, have you?" he called to Taylor, and the latter returned a negative.

Sanderson's eyes twinkled.

"I guess I've been away from civilization long enough," admitted the big man. "I would like to have a real steak about now on a real plate—the kind of steak you get at Frederick's. Thick and juicy and with mushrooms and things. A cocktail to start it off, and maybe a bottle of wine. I wish we had told Jim to stay where he was and get dinner—supper, I mean— with venison and——"

"All ready," interrupted Taylor.

Sanderson stared. Such a beautiful rippling of pliant muscle he had almost never seen. The man was a marvel of physical development. He went ahead as they trod down the soft path toward the lake.

The forest came to the very edge. Taylor poised for his plunge.

"The water is deep at the shore," he remarked over his shoulder. "It is possible to dive from cover."

At the word he flashed white from where he stood into the clear water of the lake. Sanderson noted casually that where he dove and immediately disappeared a tin can floated motionless upon the water. It was fastened about with a string that went straight down as if to mark where some man had lost something overboard from a canoe and meant to come back for it. He pointed it out to Wendover. They stood there quietly laughing and joking for a minute. Taylor had not yet come up.

A minute passed and there was no sign of him.

"Good God!" ejaculated Wendover.

Sanderson looked at him anxiously, then both peered fixedly at the water.

Another minute went by. Sanderson whipped out an oath of alarm. Wendover, a good swimmer, hauled one bulky shoulder out of his coat. But Sanderson caught his arm with a grip of command.

"Look!" he whispered sharply.

Across the lake a dark figure stole out from the edge of the forest. The slender barrel of a rifle explained the pose of hands and arms. The figure gazed at the water. It was Pulaski.

Wendover and Sanderson stood like men paralyzed. Neither was armed. The swimmer did not reappear; he must have been down three minutes.

A LONG way from where Taylor had disappeared there was a sudden flash of white. It was the swimmer's hand and arm. Instantly the head followed, sharply defined upon the mirror of the lake. It was half the distance to where Pulaski stood. So quickly as almost to leave the watchers doubting it disappeared.

"Look!" exclaimed Sanderson again.

Pulaski had lowered his rifle. The pair crouched breathless, hypnotized. An interminable time elapsed during which they did not know that they breathed.

All at once, off at a tangent, the lake was broken again by the bobbing head. It was not fifty yards from where Pulaski stood. The guide slowly raised his rifle. Sanderson felt his lungs swell for a shout of warning But the sound died away in his throat.

Low down on a level with the water and darting from the swimmer there tongued a short and vicious flame, lambent and pale. Pulaski, on the shore, swayed a little, His rifle, already in position at his shoulder, lost its certainty. The man lurched as one paralyzed. Then he plunged heavily straight forward upon the shore of the lake. His head made a little splash in the water. And the echoes of three shots tripped upon each other and died away in the forest.

There was silence. Across the lake came the swimmer slowly to where the two men stood. He climbed out dripping and with the look upon his face of the iron beneath the pleasant manner. He spoke quietly as if nothing had happened. But in one hand he carried a heavy black-steel automatic.

"Well, gentlemen," he remarked, "I will be with you as soon as I am dressed."

Sanderson recovered himself first.

"I know now what Taylor you are," he exclaimed.

Wendover turned in amazement.

"Not——?"

"That's the one," said Sanderson. "What was the matter with Pulaski?"

"Wanted for murder," said Taylor. "I left the gun in the pond under the tin can overnight. Just on a chance. They work all right wet, you know. Well—shall we go to supper?"

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SHADOWS

by ROBERT PALFREY UTTER

THE old man stood with his hand on the key of the gas-jet, warily calculating the path to the bed. His head was close to the flame, which illuminated sharply the upstanding white hair, thick and fine as beaver fur, the keen black eyes, and the trowel-shaped white beard. In the bed was the mountainous figure of his wife, shapeless under the heavy mass of bedclothes and the patchwork quilt with the elaborate star pattern.

He extinguished the light and raised the window-shades one by one. At the last one he paused to look out.

The surface of the snow lay in wind-ripples, flooded with moonlight, veined with the shadow of the naked sugar maple, as black and clear-cut as if cast by an arc-light. The air was still in the cruel cold.

With the sudden vividness that belongs to the memory of age, there flashed as it were on a screen somewhere behind his eyes the broad whiteness of a tropic beach. The surface of the sand lay in ripples, flooded with light from the huge pearly moon, veined with a sharp-lined shadow from a dead pepper-tree. The air was still in the lingering heat.

The slender figure of a girl in white glimmered like a faint ghost against the dark side of the tree. The waves rustled like dead leaves. His boat grounded softly. He shipped his oars without a sound, drew the boat ever so little up the sand, poising it nervously for a quick push-off, and ran silently toward the tree. The girl ran out to meet him. They heard the feet of horses, dully, rapidly pounding the sand; nevertheless they stopped for a kiss.

Then they ran desperately hand in hand for the boat. He heard rapid, irregular pistol shots, and the whining of passing bullets. One stung him somewhere in the back, and his face struck the sand violently. He had an instant's acute consciousness, and no more, of the sand grinding the skin of his nose and gritting in his teeth.

The old man put his hand to the back of his nightshirt and rubbed the scar reflectively. He rolled the girl's name soundlessly on his tongue. Lucia—he called it to himself "Loo*thee*ya"—Maria Carlotta de Salazar y Urrutia—the bluest Spanish blood outside of Spain. There were girls a-plenty in Boca del Rio, even if they were not de Salazar y Urrutia, girls with heavy black hair, ox eyes, and creamy, dusky skin.

The very glory of his youth was the folly that must have that one and no other, when the bullet was the price of one kiss of her lips in the moonlight. The mere memory of it was as poignant as youth itself—the shadow of the bare maple on the snow as sharp and black as that of the dead tree on the sand; only it was very cold.

"By Godfrey!" the old man muttered.

Youth—folly—moonlight; blue blood and red blood, black shadows, white sand, blue-black hair on creamy, dusky skin, thudding hoof-beats, whining bullets, and rustling waves. Youth—one vivid kiss in the moonlight. . . .

"Alec," said a muffled voice from the bed, "did you turn off the water in the kitchen?"

He unfastened the window and slid the sash up. A quiet breath of icy air struck his legs.

"Sure I did," he replied.

"I sh'd think you'd freeze," said his wife.

The old man replied in muffled grunts as he struggled to roll the star quilt closely round his neck.

"I guess my blood's circulatin' a little bit yet."

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The LOOT of the "AZTEC CHIEF"

By Arthur James Hayes

Author of "The Epic of Silver King"

SEAFARING men on the lee shore of life and circumstance frequent Cardigan's. "Mother Mayme" Cardigan, harsh-voiced and tyrannical, ministers to their needs, reproves their moral lapses with fervid torrents of salt-water billingsgate, and strives to maintain the prestige and atmosphere that accrued to Mike Cardigan's régime.

She has departed in at least one respect, however, from Mike's theory and practise. When one of the "byes is took down suddint" she sends for a doctor.

I courted Mother Mayme's favor. My door-plate was new, and my internship of recent memory. The docks were but six blocks away, and the first gleanings of patronage were from the men who went down to the sea in ships. The cross-eyed youth who ran "Mother Mayme's" errands summoned me frequently.

The bell buzzed near my ear, and I started up expectantly. I had not yet reached the station where emergency calls on rainy nights were unwelcome. It was the cross-eyed youth, breathless and sodden.

"It's a guy in the transom room," he gasped. "Sure enough this time." And after him, through the narrow cobble-paved ill-smelling streets, I went. The cross-eyed lad trotted ahead. And then, after twists and turns and smells of salt water and rotten piles and damp burlap, Cardigan's loomed up before us.

It was a square three-story frame structure, aged, unpainted and ramshackle to a degree. Mother Mayme stood in the doorway.

"It's just to ease the bye off I called yer, Doc," she explained. "There ain't a chanct in the world he'll come around." She led the way to the "transom room." It was a little cubby-hole on the third floor, dignified by the fact that it boasted a glass transom in working order. All the others had been nailed to and boarded up, evidently as a means of discouraging the practise of "going aloft" to pillage others' chests and belongings.

Mother Mayme opened the creaking door and I entered. A single smeary electric-light globe struggled feebly against the encroaching gloom. A cockroach or two scuttled across the room as I disturbed the aged floor boards, and no doubt a mouse or rat followed suit. I heard scuffling and scraping sounds behind the discolored plaster. A weak chuckle emanated from the filthy bed.

"Don't mind the inmates, Doc," said the man huddled beneath the dirty blankets. "They're all friends o' mine. Ain't had many other callers."

He endeavored to sit up, but slumped back after the effort. A faint smile hovered about his bearded lips.

"Can't man the gangway for visitors, Doc," he said. "I guess that stuff's astern o' me."

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The dying man's wide dark eyes regarded me with a fixed intent stare. His face wore the pallor that comes with long confinement. His beard and hair had grown until the brown of both mingled on his chest. He had been a big man in his day. But consumption had shrunk his barrel-like chest, and fever had wilted and palsied his frame.

I gave him strychnine to stimulate his heart action, and told him that that was all that could be done. He didn't appear perturbed by the information. He had expected it.

"Draw up a chair, Doc," he suggested. "There ought to be one hereabouts, if it ain't been lightered to outfit somebody else. There ain't much left to salvage, but I can pay you high and handsome for your time. It oughtn't be long now, and I don't like to up-anchor alone."

I drew up a chair, and silence descended upon the room, broken only by the dying man's labored respirations. He asked me a few desultory questions about my practise and silence again ensued. We both found the pauses awkward enough. I was on the point of asking him if he wanted a clergyman, when he anticipated me.

"Don't you go for sneakin' any sky pilots aboard, Doc" he entreated. "It's kinda late in life for me to get the prayin' habit. I'm for just havin' a little conversation between us two now, man to man, to make the time pass easier."

The rain beat insistently against the streaming windows, and the roar of its course down the eaves forced me to bend over him to catch his words. Suddenly he raised himself painfully on one elbow.

"I don't look loony now, do I, Doc?" he queried anxiously. "You wouldn't say I was out of my head, for instance?"

WONDERING at the question, I assured him that I thought he was perfectly rational. He seemed relieved.

"I'm glad you figure it that way," he answered. "Chart or dead reckonin' I never see the time when I had to be put to rights. Well, I had reasons, Doc, for askin', which may happen to be interestin' to you. You haven't got a drop about you?"

I had, and gave him a drink. It may not find a place in every instrument bag, but I knew that it was many a moribund mariner's greatest consolation.

"Thanks, Doc," he said, his voice already grown stronger with the stimulant. "The last sawbones I had—askin' your pardon—was a prayin' lime-juicer, down Thursday Island way. Fed me quinine for yellow Jack, an' talked about my soul. I swore I'd knife him for his pains, if ever I left the small of my back. But he'd shipped out with a Jap cruiser before ever I could heave anchor.

"You ain't like him, an' the difference is all in your favor. But that ain't what I started out to say."

A gust of wind made the old structure tremble, and the speaker paused momentarily.

"What I'm for askin' you, Doc, is this: Are you keen to pick up three-quarters of a million in gold, if you happen to find the same lyin' around loose-like?"

He noted my startled glance and smiled faintly.

"Don't go back on your say-so, Doc," he admonished. "You were on the windward tack the first time. I ain't loony an' I ain't got such a sense o' humor as to waste the time foolin' you, either. It's a straight course, I'm layin'. Three-quarters of a million, Doc. Gold, nice heavy clinkin' gold, too. Barnacle-crusted, may be, after all these years in the hold o' the *Aztec Chief*, but none the worse for the sea-water barrin' that."

I didn't interrupt him. If it was delirium, it lacked most of the usual symptoms, and piqued my professional curiosity. The man in the bed went on.

"Of course, the divers said it wasn't there," he continued. "I know that as well as any lily-livered Lloyd's clerk what ever pushed a pen. That's why the Eastern Empire people bought the salvage rights for a song. It took 'em nine weeks and eighty thousand dollars to convince themselves they wasn't any wiser than Lloyd's."

I tried a blind lead.

"If it was there," I remarked, casually, "why didn't they find it?"

"Where did the fools look for it?" he cried, in a voice shaken with excitement. "I'll tell you where, in the safe, in the captain's cabin, sunk in a steel wall with locks and bolts and combinations and all that sort o' —— rot. They sawed and drilled and dynamited and raised —— generally, an' what did it get 'em? Nothin' but the horse laugh

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from every captain, mate an' cabin-boy what clears a Caribbean port!

"They said that old Cap Hemingway stole it himself, an' the poor devil bein' dead, with his bones moldin' in the chart-room of the old *Aztec Chief* couldn't make no defense. But that ain't neither here nor there.

"The gold wasn't in the safe, just as the divers for Lloyd's and Eastern Empire said. But it was aboard, which they denied. It was stolen too, but not by the poor old cuss who shot himself when the *Aztec Chief* climbed the Devil's Horseshoe, four days out from La Guaira.

"There's one or two good reasons why I am anxious to tip you off, Doc. I think the best one is 'Havana' Hanson, what was second officer of the *Aztec Chief*. The other one—I'll tell you straight so you won't figure I'm bracin' any false pretenses—is that I can't use the loot o' the *Aztec Chief* myself.

"SOME Venezuelan syndicate was rushin' three-quarters of a million in gold to Paris, for reasons best known to themselves. Politics was unsettled an' the coffee-colored statesmen down that way, what were enjoyin' the inside graft, figures that they had better secure the returns from concession sales, while they've got the chance. Germany was gettin' ugly—you'll remember the 1903 unpleasantness—and that may 'a' boosted the idea along a little.

"At any rate they shipped it on the snub-nosed British tramp steamer *Aztec Chief*, Captain Hemingway, La Guaira for Havre. Her clearance read 'asphalt casks' in the main, along with the usual odds an' ends of cargo that a lime-juicer picks up in tropic ports. Hemingway was a little watery-eyed, timid lubber, one o' the kind that gets their papers by a merricle an' sails on their luck ever afterward."

"A careless navigator he was, an' a sloppy hand at stowin' cargo. That was why the old girl had a list to port when we climbed the Devil's Horseshoe reef, an' that was why he permitted eighty-five sacks of coffee to be stowed in the hold for'ard.

"We got the gold aboard, anyhow, thirty sheet-steel casks in wicker jackets and red wax seals that South American financiers love to peddle gold coin around in. The old man has it stored in the built-in steel safe in his cabin, an' locks the supplementary door, pluggin' the key-hole with sealin'-wax. He seemed to figure that he'd taken all necessary pains, so he went ahead to get comfortably tanked up.

"We fooled around for three days longer, before the old man got his clearance papers. It was too long to let things slide, in those latitudes. Theresa Mendez hatched the idea. She was clever enough, the little witch, to let Hanson and me think that we was the ones that sprung it.

"Her old man, a lousy one-eyed crimp, ran a water-front dive an' sailors' hang-out, an' for all her big baby eyes and timid glances, the señorita packed a first-class assortment of all the deviltry o' the scum o' seven seas.

"She was about eighteen, I guess, with the tantalizin' curves an' meltin' glances that the girls o' the tropic ports have at that time. Like enough she's a wrinkled old hag by now. But she were a beauty then, an' better men, as I've said, than me an' Hanson, lost their heads — an' maybe their pocketbooks—over her.

"I might have told her—liquor loosens my tongue, same as with most men — or maybe it was Hanson. But while we talked about the sheet-steel casks in the wicker jackets, she listens, her big wide brown eyes goin' from me to Hanson an' back, evidently figurin' which it was best to make the play to.

"'Is it not the great shame,' she said coyly, 'that two handsome beeg men, and one poor little señorita, can not share in thees gold they have shipped to the gay Paree. From Venezuela it was stolen, and to Venezuela, it is best, is it not, that it should come back?'

"Havana Hanson thumped the table an' swore by all the Norse gods that the girl was right. I ain't tryin' to sneak away with my anchor draggin'. I was with 'em from the first jump. We got to discussin' ways an' means. Hanson had to see to the coalin' that night, and left before I did. The girl and I completed the arrangements.

"I knew the combination of the safe—took pains to watch the old man manipulate it, never knowing when it would come in handy — and she supplied the idea for lighterin' it. I was to sneak the casks out during my watch, with the assistance of Manuel Mendez, a coffee-tinted cousin of hers, and smuggle 'em under the tarpaulin storm jackets o' the Number One life-boat. Hanson stays ashore, makin' it necessary to ship another mate.

"Hanson in a chartered sloop was to stand

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by off the Virgin Islands, having beaten us to Porto Rico by one of the mail or fruit boats. I knew I could count on the old man being drunk—he wasn't much account as a navigator anyway—and I figured it that Mendez and I could ease the life-boat over, on our watch, without the slightest difficulty. Hanson was to show two flashes of white and one of red off our port quarter, which same was to be the signal to lower away. We always carried one boat outboard, fer emergency, in reef waters. I aimed to tell the old man that the for'ard cables on Number One parted, stavin' in her bow, an' that we cut 'er adrift. It would ha' been likely enough.

"A lantern hanging over the life-boat's side would give him the loot lighter's bearings, and all he had to do was to drop down and hoist it aboard. It sounded good. We had one more conference the next mornin' and then Hanson books aboard the *Valantic* for Porto Rico. All the crew he needed was a couple of sea-going Bahama niggers, and they can be picked up in droves anywhere in those parts. He knew a schooner or two he could charter on short notice.

"Things seemed driftin' our way. The old man cursed Hanson for two hours without a break, an' then signed a Portuguese sealer with second mate's papers. He was a heavy-headed, greasy devil, about half-dead anyhow, with malaria, and just the fellow we needed for our scheme.

"We hadn't dropped Curaçao before I had that safe open. The old man was paralyzed drunk, and I could have scuttled the old tub without his being the wiser. But even then there had been a slip in calculations. A stay brace parted and fell across one of the boats. The canvas was eight years old and as rotten as shark-bait. The old man had them all ripped off and ordered a new set stretched. We planned to wait until the last night, when we were dogging the watch, to load the life-boat up. Meantime we had to dispose of the gold elsewhere.

"My cabin was too small. Mendez thought of the coffee sacks for'ard. We carried it down at night and shifted enough o' the coffee to hide the wicker cases. Then we had a breathin'-spell. I'd taken the pains to plug the key-hole o' the supplementary door with some of the old man's sealin'-wax, and he never suspicioned anything.

"But we overdid it. Mendez and I got to hittin' the booze ourselves. Hemingway only crept out of his quarters aft about twice a day. I was supposed to maintain discipline, and with that gold stowed for'ard I figured I was as good as made, an' lost interest in the vulgar concerns of navigation.

"I GUESS the night that we had framed to stow the loot an' lower away, the man at the wheel wasn't sober enough to see the binnacle light. We must have been thirty miles off our course. Mendez an' I had just gone below for the first load, when the old *Aztec Chief* rams her rusty nose high and dry on the Devil's Horseshoe.

"The old man came tearin' out and after gettin' it through his whisky-soaked brain what was wrong, seemed to lose his mind. He gives one whoop like a Malay gone amuck, and sends Campbell down on the throttle watch, a jingle for full speed astern. Of course that finishes the job. We rips off what few plates remained for'ard after the first crash, and the old girl shakes herself loose, and settles like a rock in nine fathoms.

"Just before she takes the final dip, we hears the old man's gun bark in the chart-room, and we knew that he had done for himself. After I'd straddled a spar for an hour or so, I saw the light signal we'd agreed upon. We'd burned a Coston before we went under, and I guess that was all that gave Hanson his bearings. We should have been thirty miles northwest of there.

"Daylight was just creepin' into the black gloom. When the sun struggled through the fog, I made out a small schooner about two knots to windward. He was tackin' back an' forth across the sunken lagoon, and I knew that he was pickin' up the survivors. Then he stands in toward me. I guess all those he'd rescued—there were only seven or eight stayed afloat—must have been between decks. He passes me by a good cable's length an' hails.

"'Soak the booze out of your system an' sound for it,' he says. 'Sorry I can't sign you, but I'm all filled up on deck-swabbin' talent. Let me know when you get the loot,' he adds.

"I could hear him laughin'. I called after him beggin' him not to leave me for shark-bait, but he squares the *Dolphin*—that bein' the craft he'd chartered—off to a freshening breeze and followin' sea, and shows me her

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taffrail, bound in for the Virgins. Think o' that, from a fellow you've shipped with for five years! An' just because I'd slipped up a little.

"I was fair crazy with the thirst and sun and fear o' sharks, when a British mail liner picks me up an' drops me off in Kingston. I lost my papers over that affair. And I've never been able to rig an expedition to go after the loot o' the *Aztec Chief*. It's thirteen years since the old tramp ripped herself open on the sunken reef. I've schemed and figured night an' day, how I might get hold of a schooner and a divin' outfit.

"It would only be ten days' work. But I didn't dare tell the big fellows in the wreckin' business, and the shoal-water talent thinks I'm crazy. It's too late now. I'd let the story of the affair die with me, only for one thing. That's Hanson.

"I'd heard that his *mestiza* knifed him in Port au Spain a year later, but it was a lie. Mendez—whom he'd picked up when the old lime-juicer foundered—hails me about two weeks ago. Just came in on a Jamaica mail liner. Says that Hanson is outfittin'. Promised Mendez a third, but the greaser thinks he's goin to double-cross him. He asked me to help him beat the Swede to it, but he'd called the turn too late."

The dying man's voice had dropped almost to a whisper. He roused himself and looked up at me.

"Just another drop, Doc," he pleaded, "and I am through."

He gulped the whisky and resumed—

"It's up to you, Doc. If you've got the spirit of a louse you'll beat that —— Swede beachcomber to it. Mendez can't. I'll be gone. There's only five of us in on the secret. In half an hour there'll be one less. And the loot is there."

He roused himself by a mighty effort and sat up.

"It's there," he screamed. "Three-quarters of a million, in new red clinkin' gold! It's been bought too, Doc. Bought by Hemingway in the chart-room o' the *Aztec Chief*, an' by Cavers and Delton and Campbell who went down with her. It's been bought by me, thirteen years beggin' a livin' and lookin' at the end o' fryin' in hell! It's paid for!

"The salvage rights have been thrown up. First come, first served. Don't let that —— crimp beat you to it. I said I'd serve him up for that desertion on the Devil's Horseshoe. It's my last chance, and I'm playin' it wide!"

He coughed and shuddered convulsively. Blood gushed forth from his mouth, a tremor agitated the wide shoulders and wasted chest, and then "Nantucket Dave" Kennedy's tousled head dropped forward on the grimy red quilts. The first officer of the *Aztec Chief* had received his clearance papers.

I drew the sheet up over the rigid gray countenance and strode out into the wind-driven rain. And in my heart was born the lust for gold.

EARLY morning found me seeking admittance into the cozy home of old Bob Gallitzan. Muriel Gallitzan, flushed of cheeks and bare-armed, opened the door. She stared at me in wide-eyed astonishment, and then burst into her roguish laugh.

"Why Jack," she exclaimed, "you look like a scarecrow. What has happened?"

I had forgotten till then that my clothes were wet, and that I had dozed off in them, in my library Morris-chair, to dream of the *Aztec Chief*. But I hadn't time for indignation. I put on my severest expression, and told her it was her father that I sought to interview.

Muriel tilted her rétroussé nose defiantly, and stalked into the sitting room. Soon old Bob Gallitzan's rumbling voice rose in cheery greeting.

He motioned me into the snug little parlor, and listened without comment, while I rushed through my story. To my great surprise he expressed no skepticism. Instead, from the way he puffed at his pipe, I thought he was laboring under suppressed excitement.

"Aye lad," he remarked thoughtfully, when I paused for breath, "I knew Kennedy before he lost his paper over the *Aztec Chief* affair. He hailed from Nantucket way, and a wild lad he was."

He paused and smoked for many minutes in silence. Muriel came in and perched herself on the arm of his chair.

"Are ye of a mind to go after it, lad?" queried her father, his eyes twinkling, his lips curving quizzically.

"I am," I replied," that is—if—if it's all square and shipshape, as you would say. You don't think it's a fairy-tale?"

"No," rejoined Gallitzan positively, "that it isn't. I well mind the *Aztec Chief* affair.

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It was toward the end of my own sailin' days. It was a queer 'un, an uncommon queer 'un, but I shouldn't doubt that your friend o' 'Mother's' place might have the facts.

"'Twould take some such a settlin' to account for the mystery. The gold had been aboard—the shippers swore to that. Lloyd's mucked around for four or five weeks, and the Eastern Empire crowd put in twice as much time in salvagin' operations. They said the gold was gone. Hemingway was accused by some of havin' lightered it himself, while he dallied around in port. But the theory couldn't be proved, an' there it rested. The old hulk was abandoned outright, and has been gatherin' weed and barnacles ever since."

And I knew that in Captain Bob Gallitzan's mind, the projected treasure-trove was a settled venture.

It was evening before I left Gallitzan's home. We pored over maps and charts all day, finally locating the dotted outline of the Devil's Horseshoe, on a Government geodetic survey chart. Its location corresponded closely to Kennedy's description, and gave added coloring of truth to his narrative.

It was settled at last that we were to proceed with all possible dispatch to Havana, there to outfit a schooner. The diving paraphernalia was to be obtained in New York.

THE following morning he introduced me to the diver he said he had in mind. Rennels his name was. A tall spare man, he seemed, but his lean lines gave promise of strength and agility. His countenance was deeply tanned, and his eyes, close set and of an unusually light gray color, gave a rather sinister cast to his features. He shook hands without speaking, extending his left hand.

I glanced at his right hand, and noticed that three fingers had been lopped off short. After a discussion of terms, he promised to be at the Tropic Mail Company's docks at three the next afternoon.

When he had gone, Muriel and I inquired on common impulse, whether Gallitzan thought he was trustworthy. The old captain assured us that he was one of the best deep-sea divers working out of New York. At that we were content to let the discussion terminate.

The trip to Havana was uneventful. There we chartered the little schooner *Thursday Princess*, a black squatty craft, with a snub nose and blunter lines than are usual in her type of sailing craft.

The old sailor made short work of raising a crew. Two grinning negro roustabouts, both of whom had seen service on Bahama spongers, were the first to come aboard, and were soon at work stowing in provision cases.

Shortly thereafter a little Chinaman of uncertain age and inscrutable visage came aboard with the intelligence that he was "allee samee Captlain G'latzin cook." Gallitzan arrived himself, a little before eight bells, with his last acquisition, a stocky little Cornishman, recently discharged from a Scotch tramp.

Early next morning we cast loose from the noisy little tug that had towed us well offshore, and swung the stubby bows of the *Thursday Princess* southeast by east. We wallowed along in leisurely fashion, the little schooner making her six and one-half knots through the slow ground-swell, the negro hands chanting quaint Jamaica ballads, and the Chinaman pattering and rattling about below.

We encountered strong but rather variable breezes and made good progress. Gallitzan and I held several long conferences and decided that in the event of everything turning out well, we should reimburse the crew with a substantial bonus.

Rennels, we agreed to give one-sixth of all treasure recovered. When we called him in and told him the story, he grunted noncommittally, and continued thereafter to sit apart and smoke in silence.

He had a strange faculty for disconcerting one with the unwavering stare of his pallid eyes. I seemed to sense his glances intuitively, and whirling suddenly, would find his little close-set gray eyes boring into my own.

The cook, called "Chunking" by Gallitzan, from the city of his birth, proved a capable hand at a ship's cuisine.

On the eighth day out, after working over a three or four mile radius, our kedge anchor hooked a coral ledge in the Devil's Horseshoe. The sunken lagoon described an imperfect arc, broken into the semblance of a horseshoe at the western end by the natural opening of the submerged atoll. The *Aztec Chief* must have entered through

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the channel, we concluded, in order to back again into the horseshoe after she had broken her back on the reef.

Joe, one of the blacks, rowed Gallitzan and myself about the ancient lagoon, for two hours. The old captain was employing his submarine telescope, a powerful glass which revealed the pink coral formations, the multi-colored marine growths, and darting tropical fishes, with astonishing minuteness of detail.

Then a sudden exclamation from Gallitzan apprised the grinning negro and myself, of his discovery.

THERE lay the old *Aztec Chief*, tilted far over to starboard, her sides and superstructure one mass of barnacle-encrusted rust. Marine growths trailed and shimmered from spar and stack, coral sprouts peeped tentatively from the long black gashes in her corroded plates, and a colony of sea anemone made a little garden on the battered bridge.

Her stumpy foremast had veered crazily eastward as if to beckon the port it would never reach. Her hatch covers were off fore and aft, and myriads of small fishes darted back and forth over their black yawning void. Rennels was for immediate action. It was a matter of three hundred yards or so from the wreck to the schooner, and we kedged her across the lagoon, shifting her into a berth almost over the *Aztec Chief*. Long into the night Rennels adjusted his complicated apparatus, in preparation for his morning's descent into the coral depths. The crew were employed in rigging up the sectional steel ladder, which coupled in fathom lengths.

The night was oppressively hot and we tumbled out gratefully at dawn. Chunking was astir before us, and after a hurried breakfast, Rennels donned the grotesque and ponderous armor of the deep-sea diver.

Muriel and I hung over the side breathlessly as he clambered over the taffrail and started to descend. His downward progress was marked by myriads of bubbles streaming up from his pressure vents. The pump, manned by Gallitzan and Joe, hummed monotonously, and the silence was otherwise broken by Roberts the Cornishman and Kanac, the other negro, who circled about the schooner in the small boats, with much noisy splashing, to guard against sharks, visible in the offing.

The pump was speeding up, and Rennels was making bubbling progress into the gloom of the forward hold. For what seemed to me a century, the steel ladder swayed gently back and forth in the translucent emerald depths. Then it grew taut again, and the diver, like some prehistoric monster, emerged from the black void and commenced the ascent. Eager hands fairly hauled him over the rail. Even the imperturbable Gallitzan's hands trembled as he assisted in unscrewing the helmet.

With his first full breath, Rennels ejaculated:

"It's there! The coffee sacks are just hollow crusts of coral and barnacles now, but the casks are there. There wasn't any in sight, but I had been pokin' around with my pick only a few minutes when I gashed one. And the double-eagles spilled all over the place. Gold," he almost screamed, "genuine, bully red gold!

"There's no use taking chances," he continued. "Those steel casks are mere shells of rust by now. They're held together only by the wicker jackets and the framework of coral that has covered them. We'll rig a running gear and you fellows hoist away by hand on signal."

A block and tackle was accordingly rigged, secured to capstan and bowsprit, and lowered away with a ballasted "sucker mouth" canvas sack, after Rennels had again descended. Breathless with suspense we watched. The diver was now out of sight. The ladder ceased to vibrate. He was at the bottom. The tackle running forward toward the bow of the vessel, began to sag and quiver. Then the signal-cord was jerked. There was a pause, followed by two more tugs upon the slender rope.

"Heave away, boys," sang out Gallitzan.

All hands dragged the bulging sack aboard. Two heavy barnacle and coral encrusted objects about fourteen inches square were revealed upon opening it. We intended to carry them into the cabin for inspection, but the little Cornishman dropped one heavily to the deck.

There was a crash, and the coral-crusted wicker parted. Gold coins poured forth in a dazzling stream, spinning, rolling and jingling to all quarters of the deck. The eyes of the astonished Jamica negroes almost started from their skulls. The Cornishman choked and gasped and vented a hysterical burst of oaths.

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Eager hands clawed each other in clutching at the gold. A perfect babel of oaths and cries and ejaculations broke forth. The unexpected turn of events flustered Gallitzan only momentarily however.

"All right boys," he roared. "Belay that, and over with it now."

In a daze we swung the ballasted sack over the rail and lowered away. Chunking with his eyes distended with awe, and Muriel, a trifle pale and very wide-eyed with excitement, collected the scattered coins in dustpans, and carried them into Gallitzan's cabin. Carefully we carried the intact and the broken casks into the captain's quarters. The next consignment of casks came up more slowly, and were handled with greater care. But old Bob Gallitzan was worried.

"Carry a gun hereafter," he whispered, as we leaned together over the rail. "The beans are spilled for fair. Rennels had to know, of course, but the others I had hoped to stall off with some sort of fake explanation. When men have seen red gold spilling around like pebbles, it generally starts their heads to workin'."

WE MIGHT have said more and perfected a plan of defense, had not the signal-cord been jerked again. Eight casks came up before the exhausted diver followed suit. And that night in the little cabin, by the light of the flickering kerosene lamps, Muriel and Rennels and I counted and apportioned the spoil, while Gallitzan stood watch just without, with a huge hand in either coat pocket that had closed about cold steel.

My senses were numbed by the profusion of coin. There were twenty-five thousand dollars in American gold in each packet. The coins were stacked in piles, set as closely together as possible, with the interstices packed with cork forms. Gold was everywhere about the cabin, gleaming red and orange in the uncertain rays of the lamps.

Heavy canvas sacks received it in units of twenty thousand. Twelve and one-half sacks full, there were, when the day's tally was completed. We locked it in the great steel safe that in the pearl-hunting days of the old *Thursday Princess* in the South Pacific, had seen thrice the wealth in pearls.

For the security of our spoils and persons, Gallitzan, Rennels and I kept regular watches. But none of us slept much, even when off duty. Every one was tired and heavy-eyed the next morning, but the excitement incident to resuming work, soon overcame all weariness.

We made slower progress now. Rennels was down, off and on, for almost three hours, and only four casks were raised. He complained about twisted beams, rusty plating and marine growths combining to impede his progress. Gulping a hasty luncheon we employed the remainder of the noon hour in counting and sacking the recently raised coin.

Rennels descended at three and in twelve minutes' time, had sent up a cask. The diver himself followed suit. He was ill, he said, from too long working periods. He wanted to rest, and impatient as we were to be finished, we did not urge him to continue.

The last coral-crusted cask remained on the deck, while we assisted Rennels to remove the cumbersome suit. I was about to turn my attention to its removal, when a cry from Chunking engaged our attention. All hands crowded aft again, and we beheld a white auxiliary schooner drawing rapidly toward us under bare poles.

The newcomer kept on his course until perilously close to the *Thursday Princess*. When within a cable's length of our craft, he veered sharply to starboard and came up abreast of us, as his engine wheezed, coughed and stopped. His bow anchor timed with nice precision, went over just in time to catch a portion of the same overhanging coral ledge that had served to secure the *Thursday Princess*.

Heavy brass lettering under the trim bows, spelled the name of the schooner as the *Barranquilla*. Gallitzan, sweeping her with his glass, said that her home port was La Guaira. This fact, in conjunction with the very assured actions of her skipper, pointed strongly to the conclusion that the recent arrival shared the secret of the *Aztec Chief*.

Every one seemed stupefied by the unexpected developments, save possibly Rennels. He leaned against the binnacle hood, rolling his quid of tobacco, and spitting nonchalantly over the rail.

"We're due for inspection evidently," said Gallitzan to me. "Stand by to man the gangway," he added ironically. There was no need for the injunction. From Muriel to Chunking the entire passenger list and crew were assembled aft, watching

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a small white boat which had cast off from the *Barranquilla.*

A burly negro propelled the craft through the placid water of the sunken lagoon, and in the stern, two men stared at the group aboard the *Thursday Princess.* One was a short pock-marked individual, very swarthy, and evidently part Indian. The other, tall, cadaverous, stoop-shouldered, with his ash-colored hair contrasting strangely with his sunburned face, we surmised to be Havana Hanson.

The tall slouchy figure stood up and hailed.

"Ahoy aboard there," he sang out. "Kin we come alongside?"

"Nothin' to hinder," responded Gallitzan.

A moment later the pair in the stern of the boat had clambered over the rail.

"All trim an' shipshape here," remarked the taller man casually, while casting a quick keen glance over the party. "What luck?" he queried.

"Which, in a manner o' speakin'," drawled old Bob carelessly, "might mean anythin' with a rim around it."

"I guess you get my drift all right," retorted Hanson, with a suddenly transformed countenance. "I'm speakin' o' Kennedy's loot, stowed for'ard in the *Aztec Chief,* below your keel here."

He scowled menacingly at Gallitzan and me.

"Well, I'm thinkin' we did pretty well in that direction," answered the old captain, with affected unconcern. "How about it boys?" and he appealed to Rennels and myself.

"About three hundred an' seventy-five thousand," snarled Rennels. "For which they was slippin' me one-sixt'."

He turned his leering face toward Hanson.

"I was afraid they might beat you out," he said. "I figured that Mendez could hardly hook up with you in time. But the two days we hung out in N'York, after I got the drift of their scheme, done it. Kennedy must ha' tipped 'em. Mendez an' me didn't open hatches on it."

HIS attitude clarified the atmosphere. He had known about the affair longer than we had. An awkward silence fell upon the group. Hanson, angrily confronting Gallitzan, was stationed farther inboard.

Mendez the swarthy, kept near the rail, his stocky body crouched and hunched as if to spring. Rennels had edged by degrees toward him. Muriel, her face pale, but her little chin set defiantly, had stepped back closer to me, as if unconsciously seeking protection.

The other members of the crew were clustered together in the bows, the negroes' eyes shining white against their awed countenances, the Chinaman and Roberts, the Cornishman, behind them, as if seeking an ebony bulwark between themselves and trouble.

"So you intend to double-cross us, do you?" roared Gallitzan, turning suddenly upon Rennels.

The tall and pallid-eyed diver seemed unable to frame a ready retort, but Havana Hanson cut in for him.

"You can call it that if you like," he sneered, "but I'd go easy on the hard names. Your end o' the game don't look much better."

"We won't discuss that," said Gallitzan evenly. "I am neither a pirate nor a thief at all events."

A slow flush mounted under Hanson's swarthy skin, and I thought he was going to spring at Gallitzan's throat.

"There ain't much ethics in this affair," continued Gallitzan. "It's stolen gold made legal by abandoned salvage rights. First come, first served. If it's an issue between who we got our tip from, and you, I'd say that Kennedy, thief though he was, was man enough to do his own dirty work. We're here first and we're goin' to stay. Rennels here can go with you if he likes. He gets his sixth, but we keep our diving outfit, and I do the honors myself."

"Like —— you do," roared Hanson.

I saw his hand drop down and backward, and cried a warning to Gallitzan. The old sailor strove to draw his own weapon, but before his hand could reach his hip, something black and shiny seemed to leap into Hanson's fist. There was a loud report, a blinding flash, and poor old Bob Gallitzan swayed for a moment and then crashed to the deck. Before I could move, Rennels and Mendez were upon me.

Some blunt object seemed to stave in my skull. I thought I heard Muriel scream. A bright light revolved rapidly in a black void, and I lost all consciousness.

When I came to, a red-hot wire seemed

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to jerk incessantly at my tortured eyeballs. My head ached and there was a roaring noise in my ears. I tried to sit up and found that I could not move. I was lying in my own berth, bound securely and too weak and sick to even struggle with the cords.

There was much clattering and shuffling of feet on the deck overhead. I heard the rattle of oarlocks beneath my porthole, and the sound of a small boat gently bumping and scraping alongside. Hanson's high-pitched voice was audible in repeated orders, but I could not distinguish what he was saying.

The rays of the moon, slanting in almost straight across the cabin, convinced me that it was early evening, or otherwise very late, if the *Thursday Princess* had yawed around.

Something rustled in the darkness. Directly across the room it was as black as pitch, yet I would have sworn that over there in the shadow something was standing, watching me with eyes that never flagged or wavered in their gaze.

Could it be one of Havana Hanson's fiendish crew, commissioned to put an end to me in my berth, and avert the peril of admiralty investigation? A chill wave of unreasoning terror swept over me. Then the figure in the corner emerged from the shadows.

"Faleeday?" it whispered, and again coming nearer, "Faleeday?" It was Chunking's version of "Farraday."

"What is it, Chunking?" I whispered.

Reassured the weazened little cook pattered over toward me. His eyes seemed uncommonly wide, and their jet depths of even greater brilliancy than usual. His Oriental imperturbability was for once absent.

"Faleeday," he questioned eagerly, "come all light now?" "Captlain G'latzin dead," he added in a dreary monotone. "Li'l glirl takee over nothee boat. Shuttee up Chunking galley. Gett'im out chop-chop backee stlove. Whaddoo now?"

"I don't know Chunking," I rejoined helplessly. "What are they doing now?"

There was a tremendous racket overhead, with much banging of heavy objects upon the deck.

"Rennel dlive 'gain," vouchsafed Chunking. "Man wha' killee Captlain G'latzin say finish up ki-ki. Gettee 'lectric-light white boat. Gettum mebbe allee glold. Takee alla clew. Mebbe sinkum *Plincess*."

CHUNKING'S pidgin English had made Hanson's plan clear enough. He had brought extra diving equipment with him, including lighting apparatus. He hoped to get as much as possible over with by working Rennels' nightshift.

By scuttling the *Thursday Princess* and dispersing her polygot crew about South American ports, he could render the affair a closed incident. By locking up the cook, he had manifested the belief that the little Chinaman would show the race's characteristic loyalty. Chunking and I would go down with the schooner.

That left only Muriel. I thought with a shudder of the big Swede's pale close-set eyes, and of Mendez's swarthy countenance. I could look for no assistance from the crew. They were either terrorized or won over by the promise of gold.

Overhead there became audible the whirring of the pumps and the shrill accents of Havana Hanson. Footsteps rattled aft, and thumped down the companionway.

"Comee chop-chop," gasped Chunking. "Keepee plentee still."

He shrank noiselessly back into the farther shadows. Hanson clattered briskly into the cabin, and flashed a lantern in my eyes. I had them closed, and feigned heavy breathing. The ruse worked. He jammed a fist into my ribs, inspected my bonds and strode over to the great chest that Gallitzan had been forced to place in my quarters.

I heard the rattle of keys and cautiously opened my eyes. The big beach-comber was kneeling in the dim glow cast by the lantern, and fitting one key after another, into the lock.

A shadow crept between me and the light. Chunking's loosened queue cast wavering snake-like shadows over my berth. He was stealthily creeping up behind the Swede, who was engrossed in the task of finding the right key. Chunking's right hand sought something in the folds of his flowing left sleeve. Then a long knife flashed forth.

In a single noiseless bound the little Celestial was upon his victim, and he buried the blade in Hanson's back. The doomed man's head fell forward on the teak chest, and he coughed hollowly. Then the body crumpled up, and little Chunking eased it gently to the floor.

In a trice he was over to the berth. The bloody knife made short work of the hemp cords. I sat up dizzily. The Chinese cook

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was back at the chest. What Havana Hanson wanted—a chart perhaps—we never definitely ascertained, but what Chunking sought when he threw back the lid, was speedily procured. It was the black automatic pistol I had neglected to get from Gallitzan.

I felt weak and dazed, but the nausea that swept over me upon gaining my feet, passed quickly. Slowly, with limbs that, trembled, I crept up and out upon the deck.

A white tropical moon shed a brilliant shimmering light upon the scene. The sea was as clear and green as molten emerald. The lights of the *Barranquilla* winked cheerfully a hundred yards away. The water lapped and gurgled about our blunt bows, and marked with phosphorescent streaks, the twitching air-tubes and life-line.

Forward—for the *Thursday Princess* had swung about and now pulled eastward against her hawser—the two blacks worked the pump. A lantern cast its murky rays over the negroes, and the whirring air-conveyor. Mendez, bulking in silhouette against the rail, was gazing down into the translucent depths. Two or three dull cubical objects near the pump, I concluded to be recently retrieved gold casks.

The half-breed turned as I emerged into the full glare of the moon, Chunking immediately behind me. Mendez must have sensed at once, the significance of our appearance. His revolver spat forth flame and noise, and I leveled the pistol at him and touched the sensitive trigger. The weapon literally screamed as it poured its nine shots at the figure beside the rail. Mendez grew strangely taller, then he doubled abruptly, and slumped over the rail.

The negroes shrieked in terror and forsook the pump. Chunking, chattering wildly in his native tongue, sped forward, and with a triumphant screech, hurled the pump and life-line far out into the emerald surface of the sunken lagoon. The steel ladder clanked against the side, as he released the three hooks and let it slip into the sea.

The shower of pearl-tinted bubbles ceased to ascend. In the awful stillness that ensued, I could again hear the ripples gurgling joyously under the blunt prow of the *Thursday Princess*.

Muriel we found none the worse for her brief imprisonment aboard the *Barranquilla*. But I have seen the home port of the white schooner since then, and I shudder to speculate upon what might have been, but for the weazened little cook of the *Thursday Princess*.

LITTLE CHUNKING is now the sole proprietor of a blue and gold mandarin café of wide repute. It is to a secluded nook in this place, that Muriel and I repair for after-theater suppers. Chunking, attired in the conventional garb of a head waiter, is an even more grotesque figure than he was in the old days of treasure-trove in tropic seas.

There is still gold in the shadowy hold of the *Aztec Chief*. But Muriel says "No" and little Muriel, with her mother's eyes and hair, gurglingly repeats her mother's mandate. It is a needless injunction. I have no heart for another expedition. The old scenes are far too vivid.

Even now I seem to see a skeleton in diver's armor, weaving back and forth with the quivering water in the hold of the *Aztec Chief*. I can imagine it gazing with sightless sockets at coral-encrusted casks, whose rent and stove-in sides pour forth into the still emerald depths, shadow-flecked red gold. I court no repetition of the scenes of that last moonlit night, on the ill-fated Devil's Horseshoe Reef.

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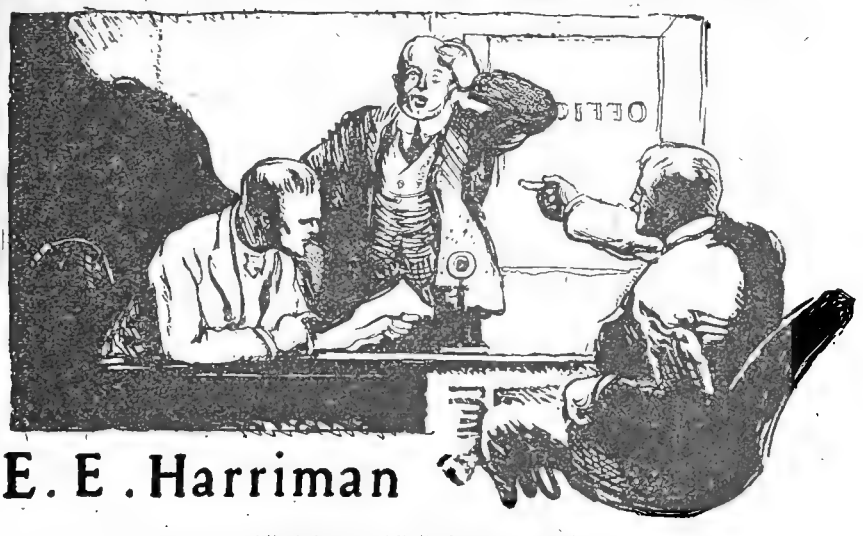
RITTER'S POND



by E. E. Harriman

Author of "Riding Steel," "That Fool Pete," etc.

BILLY GARVEY watched his father "corkscrewing" down the road, with hot eyes. For seven years Henry Garvey had been going from bad to worse, having lost the restraint of his patient, stoop-shouldered little wife. They had carried her slender little body up to its resting-place in the Walnut Hill cemetery and left Billy to bear alone the onus of being a drunkard's "family."

Five months ago Doc Harris had told Hen Garvey that abstinence was the only thing that would allow his threadbare soul to keep in touch with his battered wreck of a body twelve months longer.

The wretched man had made a very brave attempt to stay sober; just how heroic only a drinker who is far gone and trying to "come back" can know. Now his failure was patent to every observer.

He staggered in at the one-hinged gate and slumped under a shade tree. Billy watched him a moment before he spoke. His father was trying to reach something in his pocket, fumbling helplessly to get it out. Billy went over and stood beside him.

"What you fishin' fer?" he said. "An' how come you got a skinful of budge when you was done busted this mawnin'? Dan Gillis won't give you no more credit."

Hen leared up at his offspring with an attempt to look sly.

"Cash, Billy! Zhat's what. Got it shom-'ers aroun' 'f I kin fin' it. Whole pocketful cash. Shee?"

He dragged a hand from his coat pocket, greenbacks sticking out between his fingers in a crumpled mass.

"Where'd you git that?" said Billy sharply.

"Sol' lan' fer cash. Crazy fool f'm Saint Loowy give me cash fer lan'." He waved his hand tremulously and the wind took half its load from him. "Shey 'em fly! 'Sway all my monish went, jes' flew."

He lopped over to an elbow and watched Billy chase the flying bills. It was a tiring position and he lay down on his side. Billy came back with the bills and found his father in a sodden sleep. Loosening the clutching fingers, Billy took from the old man's hand the balance of the money he held and sat down on the ground to count it.

When he had finished he felt in the pocket and found one more bill which he added to the pile.

"Four hundred eighty-five dollars. I wonder how much land he sold and how much money he wasted with Dan Gillis."

He rose from the ground, rolled the money and thrust it in a pocket. His ragged hat sat grotesquely awry on top of his shock of lank, black hair and his feet were bare. His entire apparel consisted of the straw hat with flapping brim, a hickory shirt and

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blue jeans "pants." Billy was ignorant, but not stupid, and he was sure that he would find that his father had been made the victim of some sort of swindle. He set out at once for the roadhouse, a mile away where his father had secured his liquor.

Dan Gillis was resting from his arduous labors of serving half a dozen farmers, when Billy slouched in. His feet were on a card-table and his shoulders against a wall. He rolled one unfriendly eye at Billy and asked him what the devil he wanted.

"How much land did pap sell today and how much did he git fer it? Do you know?"

"He sold the Ritter homestead an' he got six-hundred dollars. Anything else you'd like t' know?" said Dan in a grouchy tone.

"Did he square up his bar bill? I want to know 'case he done give me his money t' keer fer an' I ain't wantin' no bills hangin' over."

Dan gave Billy a more careful, interested glance and took his feet down. He wished he had known Billy was coming so he could have been prepared with a good, long account, nicely itemized.

"Ye-es," he said reluctantly. "He done squared up everything."

"How much did he owe?" Billy's tone was careless.

"Som'ers between eighty-five an' ninety," he answered.

"Then how come he on'y has four eighty-five left out o' six hundred?" Billy's tone had changed. "An' how come he sol' th' place fer six-hundred when ever'body knows its wuth more'n fifteen? Eighty acres o' th' bestest land in ol' Missourah! They's a nigger in th' woodpile, an I know it.

"Dan Gillis, you done got my pore ol' pap drunk when you knowed danged well he was a-tryin' t' hol' offen likker. Who's th' skunk that helped ye do 'im outen his eighty?"

"Looky hyer, Billy Garvey," said Dan rising. "Git outen my place an' git quick. You cain't come in hyer an' abuse me ner Mr. Scott, neither. He's as fine a man as ever sot foot on my doorsill."

"So that's the feller, is it? I been a-wonderin' what he was hangin' aroun' Goodwinses so long fer. How much did he gin ye fer helpen skin pap? All ye could slip offen him when he paid ye?"

With a bellow of rage Dan sprang for the boy, but he was like a bull trying to catch a weasel. Billy eluded his rush with perfect ease, his bare feet carrying him swiftly past the awkward bulk of the bloated Gillis, in a curve that landed him at the door. Here he paused to jeer, with a derisively twisting face.

"Somebody's gotta pay fer this, Dan Gillis, an' I ain't a-carin' if it's you or Scott. But I won't fergit they's a debt due an' boun' t' be c'lected. You watch out, fer I'm goin' t' do my own c'lectin'."

He danced back from the door as Gillis charged again and went on.

"I b'lieve y' charged pap two prices fer all he drinked hyer an' then stole thirty-five dollars offen him when he paid up. Oh, I'll keep inside th' law, fer I ain't aimin' t' let ye pen me, but I'll git paid some time. An' I'll c'lect intrust."

"You git away from here, you ——— longed-haired pup!" bellowed Gillis, shaking his fist. "Git an' don't come back with any more of your danged insinuations."

"I ain't insinuatin'—nothin'. I'm a-talkin' right out in meetin'. You're a low-down thief of a pig-suckin', sheep-stealin' skunk. See any insinuations in that, dang ye?"

With this bit of engaging frankness, Billy stuck a derisive thumb to his nose, wriggled four long, grimy fingers, and started for home. He knew that there would be no chance of holding his father back from drinking. The old man had been so thoroughly scared, by the doctor's prophecy, that he had abstained for ninety days. Now that he had broken the drought he would be frantic for more, and as long as he could get it he would continue to pour the vile mixture of drugs which Dan called whisky, down his parched throat.

He knew that a sleek, fat-faced man had been stopping at the Goodwin place and had heard that he represented the Monarch Smelting Company of St. Louis. He wondered what the fellow wanted of their eighty acres. Half-way home he found out. He met one of the Hall boys, scuffling along the dusty road, and young Hall hailed him.

"Hey, Billy! Is it true that fellow Scott has bought your pap's place? An' is he a-goin' t' build a smelter there? Ike Venner says so an' says his dad is goin' to do the haulin' fer th' comp'ny."

"He done bought th' place. That's all I know," answered Billy.

"Gee!" said Don Hall. "That's 'cause th' ol' war made prices go up an' all th' ol' mines git busy. My dad says it's a mighty good thing fer Missourah they don't know

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nuff' t' be peaceful in Yurrup. What you 'n' your dad goin' t' do now?"

"I dunno," said Billy solemnly, as he plowed his dusty way past Don. "Turn hobo, most likely."

EIGHT days later Billy woke to find Doctor Harris had spoken truly and his father lay cold and still in his dingy bed. The old man had established a new credit at the roadhouse and never let a day pass without drinking till he fairly oozed alcohol at the pores. The coroner and his jury said alcoholism and no one ventured to dispute the verdict.

"Well, Billy," said Doc Harris. "It ain't like he was young and nippy. You know he hasn't been much of late years."

"He was pap an' all I had," was Billy's sober answer and the doctor was silenced.

Scott was prompt in giving Billy notice to vacate, serving him with legal written notice two days after Hen Garvey's funeral.

Billy began ransacking the place, getting all the poor furniture grouped in the largest room, after emptying drawers and searching for any possible valuable articles. He filled an old valise with trinkets that had belonged to his mother and from a drawer long disused, took a flat black book in which his father had kept his accounts many years.

He sold the furniture for a small sum to one of the neighbors and lugged the valise over to that neighbor's house. He had made arrangements to get his board and lodging there till he knew what he would do. He still had the bulk of the money his father had brought home and added to it the sum received for the furniture.

Dan Gillis had given him a bill for liquor drank by the old man during those last few days and Billy threw it in his face. Now the roadhouse keeper was trying to find the money and attach it.

Among the bits of furniture Billy had found the little footstool used by his mother, a worn, ragged-edged affair with a stuffed top. Laying the bills flat, Billy folded them once lengthways, lifted the padding with a case-knife and slid the bills well into the center. Then he set the little stool beside his bed and dropped his shoes on it. They were only for special occasions and could guard his bank six days in the week.

After the money was safely stowed in its hiding-place, Billy went out, in his usual garb of straw hat, hickory shirt and blue overalls, to see if he could hire himself to some farmer.

He had no plans for the future and only one idea beyond providing for a living, the idea of some way, he did not know how, but some way, getting even with Dan and Scott for swindling his father. He walked down the road past the old place and saw the men digging the foundation of the smelter.

The eighty acres had been known as the Ritter place before Garvey had bought it and the name still clung to the round pond that lay in the western end of the farm. It was a deep pond and narrow, the whole body of water being held within the borders of a ten-acre patch. The smelter was to be built upon the eastern bank and discharge its waste into the pond. Billy lingered a moment as he passed and watched the men and teams at work. Ritter's pond would never give the boys any more pleasure as a swimming-pool and never again put fish-dinners on their plates.

With a parting wish that Scott would fall into the pond from the bank where he stood, directing the workmen, Billy went on past and sought work among the near-by farms. That evening he came back to his room unsuccessful and weary. He had found no work and he was disheartened. To help pass the time he picked up the old account-book and began to run over page after page.

After he had followed his father through several years of his struggles for a living, clearly shown by the character of the accounts, he found one page that seemed to be of greater interest. He no longer read what price had been received for hogs and how many pounds of wool had been sold, but read and reread this one page.

After a third reading Billy sat with elbows on the table and thought long and intently. Then he went back to his page, read it again, placed a strip of paper to mark the place and laid the book on a shelf in the corner. That night Billy lay on his back in the darkness, his eyes wide open and looking up toward the ceiling, as he struggled with some subject that had driven sleep from him.

The next day Billy went to the village that lay two miles to the south and spent half a day loafing around with the idlers who sat along the station platform, or hung around the blacksmith shop. He said little, but listened well, as became a youth of eighteen. Not till he had been one with them for hours

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did he venture more than a greeting. Then his first remark was a short and general one.

"Beats all how many of our folkses hes moved away an' let th' strangers in," he said to John Wilson.

"That's right, Billy," said John. "There's Pete Vinson gone an' Lot Jenver an' Bill Hoag an' Ed Simmons sence Christmas. Then Tim Carrigan an' Jack Carson last Fall an' Vance Heaton an' Duke went th' Spring before. Dog-goned big bunch gone an' what's takin' their place? A gang o' Eyetalyans an' other furriners. I hanker fer my own kind an' ain't partial to them dago fellers, myself."

"Lessee," said Billy. "Bill Hoag went t' Kansas an' Carson t' Oregon. Where did Vance an' Duke go? I can't jest remember."

"Them? Oh they went up in the Gunnison country, little place called Ruby. Bet a hoss they wisht they's back in ol' Missourah by now. Best State in th' Union, by mighty."

THAT night Billy sat by his rickety little table and toiled, in perspiring effort, over a letter. It was late when he extinguished the smelly kerosene lamp and crawled into his bed. His wakeful hours of the previous night had helped to make him so sleepy that he hardly noticed the nubbins left in the shucks that made his mattress, merely wriggling a trifle to work his way down between the worst of them and dropping off at once.

When the contractor came on the ground to start his smelter construction Billy saw him and secured a job as helper. Day after day he labored between the handles of a wheelbarrow or rustling lumber, watching the huge building rise on its foundation and seeing Scott, in all his complacent fatness, supervising the job. If the agent noticed him he gave no sign and Billy contented himself with scowling from afar.

Billy received a letter about two weeks after he began work and sent another of his labored scrawls in answer. Soon after that he told one of his friends who worked with him that he thought of going West after the smelter was finished.

"They ain't no chancet fer a feller here, lessen he wants t' be a roughneck aroun' this dog-gone smelter er work on a farm fer twenty an' board a houn' dog wouldn't eat. Out West a feller gets more like a even break. I'm a-goin' sure."

Twice Billy had come home to find evidence that his room had been gone over carefully by some one who made an exhaustive search for something. He guessed that it was at the instigation of Dan Gillis that search had been made and when a friend told him that Dan had pumped hard to find out if he knew where Billy had put his cash, he knew that he had been wise in hiding it. He grinned however, and said Dan must be having a heap of fun.

Then Dan tried to garnishee his wages and found that Billy had checkmated him by assigning them to Tom Griffin, for the purpose of paying his living expenses. Dan gave up the attempt to collect that bill for the time being and Billy worked on in peace.

When the smelter was completed Billy found himself again out of work and drifting. Apparently it did not worry him, for he loafed about the village or watched the first shipments of ore being dumped at the smelter. After the first batch of ore had been run and he had seen the waste discharged into the pond, Billy went down to the village and called at the court-house. That afternoon the superintendent had a caller, a lank, black-haired boy in rough clothing and heavy shoes. He stood in front of the desk and leaned his arms on its top as he looked into the astonished face of the official.

"My name's Billy Garvey," he began. "An' I come up hyer to tell ye t' stop dumpin' waste in Ritter's pond."

"You're crazy," said the superintendent. "We own that pond and we'll use it as we see fit."

"I reckon ye won't," said Billy. "'Tain't your pond an' don't ye let another pound go in 'er. Never was your pond."

The superintendent stared, anger and astonishment showing in his face. Some quality in the thin young face checked his angry words and he shoved a chair around the corner.

"Sit down here and tell me what has given you such an idea. I judge you think you are right, but we know we bought that pond and paid spot cash for it."

Billy maintained his position stolidly and his eyes narrowed.

"I'm comfortable hyeraway. I know dog-gone well ye think ye own th' pond, but ye don't. If ye try t' dump there any more they's a deputy sheriff outside'll put the kibosh on that."

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"Explain yourself," said the impatient official. "I have no time to waste listening to you unless you can show proof."

"I'll tell ye right enough," said Billy. "My pap bought eighty acres from ol' man Ritter an' the pond was on it. Then Vance Heaton he done got th' fool notion he'd git rich sellin' ice an' bought ten acres that tuk in the pond.

Three years a-runnin' they wa'n't over four inches o' ice on th' danged pond an' then Vance he lit out fer Colorado. A month ago I done bought the ten acres offen Vance an' th' deed's on record."

"You knew this all the time and laid for us, did you?" said the superintendent. "Thought you'd blackmail us, hey?"

Billy's face flamed red and his eyes turned to black pits with a red spark in each one.

"Now you jest looky here," he said angrily. "Your danged agent got Dan Gillis t'help git my pap boozed an' had a deed all ready fer signin' when he was stewed. Your man copied th' ol' Ritter deed up in th' court-house an' never looked no furder. Then when my pap was full they give him six hundred dollars fer a eighty wuth fifteen hundred an' sent him home lousy drunk.

"Don't you talk to me none about blackmail nor nothin' after doin' pap outen his farm thataway. Your danged ol' smelter's over on my lan' six feet an' usin' my pond, an' th' deputy's outside jest a-itchin' t' git a whack at ye with them papers."

THE superintendent thought quickly before he answered. Here was a seventy-thousand-dollar smelter just starting work. It must have a dump and was so built that Ritter's pond was the sole spot available. Besides that, if the boy told the truth, they were over their line. His anger rose again, but this time at Scott.

"Wait here while I talk to the president over the wire," he said.

He hurried into another room and called St. Louis. The conversation with the head of the concern was short and he came back with a flushed face, to drop in his chair and scowl at Billy.

"You got us over a barrel, you young whelp, but for God's sake don't skin us. Have you anything to show to prove your claim?"

Billy handed him a folded paper and waited for him to read it. It ran like this:

This is to certify that Billy Garvey has this day placed on record in this office a deed from Vance Heaton for the ten acres bought by said Vance Heaton from Henry Garvey in 1904. As there are no incumbrances of record and title rested in said Heaton, the ten acres is now the undisputed property of said Billy Garvey. Given this 12th day of June, 1916.

JOHN HOOD,
County Recorder.

The official looked up from the paper.

"How much do you want for your ten acres?" he asked.

"Fifteen thousand dollars," was the answer.

"Fifteen thou—" The superintendent gasped and stopped. Then he started again.

"Why that's an outrage! The best land around here sells readily for twenty-five an acre. This is blackmail, pure and simple. We'll never pay it in the world."

"Suit yerself Mister Colvin. I ain't in no hurry. I got a little left t' live on an' you won't hol' out more'n a month. An' jest remember I done tol' ye not t' say blackmail ag'in. Nex time ye say it th' price goes up a thousand."

Again the official went to the phone in the next room and Billy leaned on the high desk till he returned.

As Colvin came back to his desk Scott strolled in. Colvin sat back in his chair and scowled at him with hearty anger.

"Mr. Scott, do you know what kind of a muss you have made? Do you know that you have set a trap for the Monarch Company and led them squarely into it? A—— big trap, Mr. Scott, and it's holding like an old-fashioned bear-trap. Do you know it?"

Scott stared in astonishment at Colvin, then at Billy and at last it came over him who Billy was. He colored furiously, but made no reply. He seemed at a loss for words.

"Yes, Mr. Scott," Colvin went on. "You bought the eighty acres from this boy's father, Henry Garvey, and made no effort to ascertain whether any part had been sold. The whole —— pond belongs to the boy and we're in a pretty pickle."

"Now," he went on. "The boy demands fifteen thousand dollars and we have to make the best bargain we can. I have stated the case to Mr. Ganwell and he tells me to inform you that you are fired. Get out! Now, Garvey, when this fat fool leaves the office we'll get down to brass tacks and settle this matter."

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"Hol' on, Scott," said Billy. "I done tol' Gillis I'd make some un pay fer gittin' pap tight an' trickin' 'im. I reckon I done it."

He turned his back on the chopfallen Scott and looked at Colvin.

"How about the cash?" he asked.

"I'm instructed to offer you ten thousand," said Colvin.

"Nawthin doin' at them figgers," said Billy.

"Well," said Colvin after fifteen minutes of unavailing arguments. "We'll split the difference with you or fight. That's final and the limit. What will you do, scrap or accept a certified check?"

"I'll take the check," said Billy. "Gittin' even with ol' Scott is wuth somepin'. An' then I'm goin' to watch th' deputy arrest Gillis fer enterin' my room an' ransackin' it an' kerryin' off two dollar bills I lef' on the table a purpose to ketch 'im.

"I got their numbers writ down an' each one has a spot of red ink in the eye of the feller in the corner. Dan he paid them bills to th' liv'ry stable yistuhday an' th' sher-ruf's got 'em now.

"When I've giv' testmony on his case I'm goin' to foller Vance Heaton out West, where a feller has a chanct. Ain't nothin' doin', hereaway, nohow."

BALLAD OF THE RUBBER TRADERS

by A. JUDSON HANNA

Who came to Para was glad to stay;
Who drank *assai* went never away.
Brazilian Saying.

WE'VE DRUNK your wine of high renown,
We've walked in your Palm-tree Colonnade;
We liked your pretty painted town,
Your dainty dame and your coiffured maid;
We liked it all, and yet, and yet—
We said good-by without regret.

Down from the Amazonas,
Where the world-long Purus flows,
To your city of lamps from the rubber-camps
We came at the season's close.

We came to you like children,
To discharge the season's debt;
To your gilded halls and your changers' stalls,
With the gain of our toil and sweat.

We came for honest revel,
With the gain of our honest toil;
But ye taught the wheel to lie and steal,
To plunder and thieve and spoil.

We knew not the dice were loaded,
That the turn of the wheel was false;
In the pride of our shame we played the game
To fatten your money stalls.

In the Amazonas silvas,
Where the world-long Purus flows;
In the deadly damps of the rubber-camps,
Where the milky Hevea grows;

Come visit us next season,
Or come whenever you choose;
We'll play at a game of another name,
And we will not play to lose.

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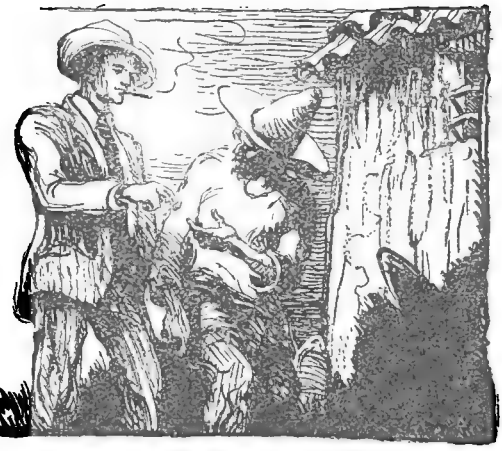
A SPUR FOR A JADED NAG



By Edgar Young

Author of "The Yardstick," "The Ninth Man," etc.

EUGENE RODIN, puffing a black *canela* cigaret, strolled slowly down Calle Conventillo. It was eight o'clock at night and he had just dined at the Maury. He had walked around the plaza a few times to the music of the band, and not feeling in the mood to mix with the crowd had turned off abruptly into Calle Union and after following this for a couple of squares had wandered off into some of the quieter streets. He was killing the hours until bedtime, *paseando* the Spaniards call it.

A couple of days before, Danny Powers, superintendent of the Cavallo Gordo mine, had sent him down to Lima to buy supplies that were urgently needed. He had found everything except the No. 2 short-handled shovels, by searching through all the stores of the city and he had had to substitute long-handled shovels of German manufacture. He knew how Dan Powers would swear when he saw these.

Having had experience with Peruvian procrastination he had personally seen these supplies to the station and seen them waybilled and loaded into the cars. On the morrow at six o'clock, no saints having intervened to the contrary, both he and the supplies would be aboard the upbound Peru Central *pasajera* bound for Cavallo Gordo, via Ticlio.

At the corner of Conventillo and Calle Huevo he paused in front of a small *cantina*. Through the open door he could see a crowd of peon men and women dancing within. It was the native step dance of Peru, called the *mariñera*, a dance that not many white people ever learn. A few couples occupied the floor at one time and danced with solemn faces, the man and woman facing each other, while the rest of the crowd seated themselves in chairs ranged along the four walls and occupied themselves in singing comic ribald songs, to the music of the twanging guitars, and now and again yelled rude jests to the dancers. When one of these smiled, as he eventually had to, they howled for him to be seated and another arose to take his place. The floor was of hard-packed clay. Shoes were conspicuous by their absence. At each pause of the dance a huge cup of *chicha*, holding a couple of quarts, was passed from one to the other and each drank until it was finished.

Rodin started away when some one clutched his sleeve. He turned sharply. A man dressed like a peon stood in the gutter. Rodin glanced him over. He was a little man, smaller than Rodin himself, and he was stooped as if by age. But he was not an old man. There was not a gray hair in the jet-black beard that matted itself on his face. He was dressed in a rough straw hat, a cheap cotton shirt and a pair of flimsy drill trousers which had once been white. These were rolled half-way to the knee and the shirt was worn, as is the custom of some peons, with the tail hanging loosely on the outside of the pantaloons.

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He stood trembling, as if from cold, although the night was very warm.

"What wilt thou have?" Rodin curtly inquired in Spanish.

"Ah, would the good señor be so kind as to confer the extreme favor upon a poor unfortunate of giving a couple of *reâles* with which to buy food?"

He stretched forth a clutching hand that shook as if with palsy.

The Spanish was good yet there was a slight foreign accent to it. Eugene Rodin had been speaking Spanish for years and he noted this. He also knew this man did not wish money to buy food with. He had seen many slaves to *tequila, mescal, agua'diente, ron, chicha, cachasa* and similar alcoholic stimulants brewed from cactus, herbs, fruits and saps in other parts of Latin America. This man was a "white eye" devotee, and the fact that it had downed him also testified that he was not a native.

Rodin slipped a *sol*, or Peruvian dollar, into the outstretched hand of the man and watched him amble as rapidly as his tottering limbs could carry him further down Calle Huevo where drink could be had for a couple of *centavos* a tumblerful. His gait was at once laughable and pitiful. He bent far forward, his arms swinging loosely, and from his movements it seemed as if his hips and lower spine had grown solid.

"Every man to the booze of his own country," pondered Rodin as he watched the poor creature glance guiltily back over his shoulder and then dive into a wretched little *cantina* a few blocks away.

"Is it because the alcohol of these liquors is worse than that contained in the 'red eye' of the North or the drinks of Europe?" he asked himself. He thought not. Alcohol was alcohol from whatever source it was obtained. The natives seemed to be able to stand it. Then why was it that it took a white man so low? For actually when a white man started using these native drinks he rapidly went down below the level of the lowliest peon. He had seen men who had been well up in the world, at one time, going barefoot and begging for pennies on the streets.

He had seen a former general-manager of a railroad he had worked for in the States, on the streets of Mazatlan, Mexico, panhandling the tourists who came ashore, for money with which to buy drink. And they seemed to want this native stuff above anything else in the world. Flood, the gambler who owned the *Casino* and the *La Puerta del Sol*, had demonstrated this to him in Rohrer's Café in Mazatlan one morning.

FLOOD, besides being a square gambler and a good fellow, was something of a wit and a philosopher. Three "*tequila* heads," Americans who had come down with the first construction outfit of the C. R. Y. Y. R. Railroad were coming across the plaza. They had seen Flood standing in the door of Rohrer's and always in the past he had been good for the price of many drinks. Flood was a money-spending machine. He did not care where his money went just so it went from him and quickly.

He beckoned to Rodin.

"Here comes 'Three Fingers,' 'The Red-Muzzled Guy' and 'Alabam,'" he chuckled, "watch me have some fun with them."

They were a pitiful trio and they began at once to voice their needs of a drink.

"Yes, yes, boys, you shore do need a few jolts. You look like the hawgs have had you. I just feel as if I'd like to have something myself. Come right on in and we will have something that will make life look brighter."

They looked at each other. Always before he had slipped them the change without comment. They knew that Rohrer's was a first-class place and they doubted whether he served *tequila* or *mescal*. Also they knew a small place down on the water-front where a glassful of either could be had for the small sum of a native penny.

The four went in together. Rodin followed and seated himself at the next table. He ordered a cigar and a glass of ginger ale. Flood had the three seat themselves at a table while he went up to the bar and spoke to the bartender in an undertone. He winked at Rodin as he came back and seated himself with the three tatterdemalions who fidgeted uneasily in their chairs. He began telling them stories that caused Rodin to chuckle. Flood easily had the most fertile brain in the whole of Mexico. But the three took scant interest in what he was saying. They were watching the moves of the bartender.

When the *mozo* came with three quarts of imported champagne of a well-known brand and a glass of whisky their faces fell.

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"Mr. Flood," protested "Three Fingers," his lips and Adam's apple trembling, but not with emotion, "it's too bad for you to spend so much money on us. If it's just the same to you couldn't you hand us a few dimes and we can go out and get some drinks where it won't cost so much?"

"No, no, boys, couldn't think of it! I've got every pocket full of money. If I had more pockets I'd have more money. I've often intended to treat you boys right but I ain't never had time until now. May never have time again. Get that under your belts in a fast and furious fashion for there's more where that come from."

He frowned as they hesitated, and uncorking the bottles he shoved them into the hands of the unfortunate three. They did not dare risk Flood's wrath by refusing outright. He had, single-handed, a short time before licked big "Jumbo," as he called him, the railroad blacksmith, and his four helpers to boot, and had driven them in front of him clear out of town and around to Urías. Flood had often said that if he couldn't lick a man he knew thirteen ways to keep from getting licked. There were bigger men in Mazatlan than these three "white eye" fiends who feared him. So they downed the champagne while he watched them. He told them what a pleasure it gave him to show them a good time and ordered more quarts. It disgusted them.

Their stomachs cried for "white eye." Soon they were weeping. They begged Flood to buy them just one drink of *tequila*. He diplomatically refused, winking slyly at Rodin. The truth was that they would have given all of the champagne for one small glassful of native liquor. But Flood made them drink until the head of each sank upon his chest. He paid the bill and sent the waiter out to find three peons. He had them carry the men into a room of a cheap *meson*, or lodging-house, where they could sleep off the effect of the drunk.

But before he left them he sent out for three one-gallon wicker-covered *garifónes* of *tequila* and wrapping a bill around the handle of each demijohn left one by the side of each cot. And he told the proprietor of the *meson* if they or their property were molested there would be a reckoning.

This object lesson, together with other incidents, had convinced Rodin that a white man, once on the mat with native booze, scarcely ever was able to arise again.

Was it because the alcohol of these drinks was more potent than that of rye or corn whisky? Or was it because any white man who went against the native stuff was shunned by his fellows and considered by them as good as done for?

Rodin chewed this over in his mind as he made his way back to the hotel and while he undressed for bed.

II

THE clock on the spire of Pizarro's cathedral marked a quarter of six as Eugene Rodin hastened across the plaza toward the Central Station. The night before this same plaza had been swarming with life. Lazy-eyed señoritas had strolled around and around the mating ring under the keen eyes of vigilant mamas while a circle of young dandies with diminutive pointed mustaches and twirling canes had formed in a circle, moving in the opposite direction so that they and the girls met again and again. Looks had been given, sighs had been vented, flirtations had been carried on, love had been in the music and in the very breeze that gently moved the swaying palms. Yes, yes, Dan Cupid is a busy fellow in the tropics where the hot blood of youth fairly boils in the veins!

A lone man, his face covered by a straw hat, lay on his back in the grass by the side of the walk. As Rodin hurried past he heard words, in English, muttered aloud that caused him to pause. The man as he dreamed thought he was arguing with some one.

"I tell you, Jim, it's no use. Go on and leave me alone! I'm done for. The stuff has got me. It's dragged me down. I'm not a man any more, but a dog. Don't worry about me, old chap. I won't last long. When I'm dead, don't take the trouble to bury me. Just throw me out somewhere and let the hogs eat me. That's all I'm fit for."

His voice trailed off into vague mutterings and groans. Rodin walked over and removed the hat which covered the face. It was the man he had staked the night before.

"And he's a Yankee too! My own countryman. Poor old fellow!"

He stood irresolute for a moment. He glanced up at the clock. It was ten minutes to six. He barely had time to make

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the train. He took a couple of steps away and then returned. The feeling for a fellow countryman is stronger in a foreign land than it is at home. A wave of pity surged over him. But what was he to do?

A rickety carriage stopped at the edge of the square and the driver waited. This decided him. He reached down and picked up the little man under his arm as if he had been a sack of meal and started for the carriage. His burden struggled and fought feebly but did not awaken. The driver gaped but said nothing when Rodin placed him on the seat and got in beside him. They were a queer lot, these *gringos*. He had seen others down for a vacation from Cerro de Pasco who had done things as peculiar as this. He whipped his jaded *cavallitos* and soon they dived through a narrow street to the station. With an eye on the tip he knew was coming he dismounted and helped carry the intoxicated man aboard the train.

They were well on the way to Tíclio before Rodin's charge aroused. He had been sprawling in a seat and he sat up and gaped about hazily. The cold of the higher altitude had begun to grip him and he was all ashiver. Rodin slipped off his overcoat and came over to him.

"How are you feeling by now?" he asked good humoredly.

The man started, shrugged his shoulders in the native fashion and spread his hands fanlike before him.

"*No intiendo, señor, descúlpame pero yo no hablo Ingles.*"

Rodin grinned.

"So you don't understand or speak English, eh? Well, that's pretty good. How about United States American? Have you forgotten how to speak that?"

The little man searched Rodin's face. He was shivering as if he would fall apart. Rodin handed him the coat and told him to put it on. He did so silently. Rodin sat down in the seat beside him. There were few passengers and after a few stares they again occupied themselves at gazing from the windows.

The locomotive coughed regularly as it dragged the few cars around the switchbacks and steadily mounted the almost perpendicular side of the mountain. Rodin had taken a small leather-backed copy of Omar from his pocket and was reading it. Needless to say he did not take the old philosopher literally.

The other turned and spoke in almost a whisper.

"Who are you and why am I on this train?"

"My name is Eugene Rodin. I am chief timekeeper at the Cavallo Gordo mine. I found you lying in the park and I brought you along."

"Why?"

"I thought perhaps I could help you get hold of yourself and get on your feet."

"It's no use. I'm done for. Better let me return to Lima."

"Not so soon. There are two things I have thought of. When I see that it is no use I will aid you in the other direction. I will give you all the 'white eye' you want. I will buy it for you by the bottle, jug, keg and barrel if it breaks me. It's up to you. You can take your own time. Are you satisfied?"

The stranger nodded and dropped his chin on his breast. Soon he was snoring easily.

III

THEY changed cars at Tíclio. This is where the Peru Central pierces the Andes through the Galera tunnel at an altitude of nearly sixteen thousand feet. A large shay locomotive with two coaches and a baggage-car stood waiting on the Cavallo Gordo Company's branch. Rodin and his companion were the only passengers who transferred. He supported the little man into one of the coaches and saw him seated. Then he came out to see that the supplies he had bought in Lima were being transferred.

"What shall I call you?" he asked when he came and dropped into the seat with the trembling little figure.

"Dorman, Harvey Dorman," he half whispered.

As the train crawled over the Devil's Leap, as it was called in Spanish, one of the highest bridges in the world, which clung to the bare cliff walls on either side and bridged a chasm over fifteen hundred feet in depth, Rodin crossed the aisle and looked down from the window. When he turned there was a flash of metal as Dorman quickly hid something in the overcoat pocket.

"Guess I'll take that gun. I forgot I left it in my pocket. Wait a month. If you feel the same way then call on me for it. I

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have some peculiar ideas and I'm very accommodating."

Dorman bowed his head as Rodin ran his hand in the overcoat pocket and recovered the revolver. Then he glanced warily at the man who had kidnaped him to see if he was joking. Rodin's face was stern and he realized that he was in deadly earnest. Here was help to straighten up or help to go over the Great Divide. Nothing could be fairer than this. Over the divide it would be, thought Dorman sadly, a few big drunks from the liquor Rodin had promised, then—the finish. He went to sleep with this in mind.

He was aroused by Rodin shaking him. They were at Cavallo Gordo. It was after nine o'clock at night. Harvey Dorman arose and stumbled out of the coach behind Rodin. The air is very light here in the high altitude, weighing less than seven pounds to the square inch. At sea-level it weighs fifteen and the inside of the head is adjusted to this pressure. Harvey Dorman's brain seemed to be trying to burst out through his skull. The acrid smoke from the smelter tried to rob the air of what little oxygen it contained. Dorman gasped like a fish out of water. His stomach was quivering and jumping about within him like something alive. Blood began oozing from his nose and ears. As he tottered down the car steps he sank silently to the ground. He was in the throes of *serroche*, or *puno*, the high-altitude sickness, like but many times worse than seasickness.

It had been Rodin's intention to get Dorman into his quarters in the big stone dormitory, or *Casa Piedra*, as it was generally called, and get him rigged out in a suit of his own clothes before allowing any of the boys to see him. For a strong man there is slight danger from *serroche* but he feared that Dorman's heart had been affected by the alcohol he had been consuming. He reached and gathered him up as he had done in Lima and started down the hill to the little company hospital.

He went directly into Doctor Craig's office. The doctor was not in. Rodin opened the door leading into the ward and looked around. There were only a few patients in the long rows of cots. A Peruvian nurse arose from a desk in the center of the room and came to inquire what was wanted.

"*El doctor no está?*" Rodin asked.

"No, señor, not yet. He should have been here two hours ago. He has never remained away like this before. There may have been an accident in the mines and he is bringing them down on the engine, no?"

Rodin went back into the office. Dorman's face was white as cotton. He quickly felt for the pulse. It was so feeble he could barely distinguish it. He stepped to a glass case containing bottles of medicine and ran his eye over the labels. There was a bottle of whisky and he uncorked this and taking a spoon he tried to force some of it through the unconscious man's teeth. Dorman's eyes fluttered open.

"*Chicha*," he murmured, "you might be able to get some over in the peon settlement."

Rodin put on his hat and hurried out. He started over toward the cluster of mud huts that formed the Quichua settlement. A group of peons huddling together were coming along the path. He gave way for them. They were carrying something in a blanket.

"The doctor is not there," he called as he saw it was a man they were bearing.

"Already we know it, señor, this is the doctor."

Rodin felt a chill run over him from head to foot. "Doc" Craig injured! He was the most popular man in the camp. No better man ever trod shoe-leather than this big, good-natured surgeon. Times without number he had been seen to weep at the suffering of others.

He was sympathetic and human to the core. And the men of Cavallo Gordo swore he was the best fellow and the best physician in all South America and the world. Rodin turned and followed them as they bore Craig into his own office and laid him upon his own operating-table.

The nurse came in and began weeping hysterically. The peons removed their hats and stood gazing stolidly.

"How did this happen?" asked Rodin as he began feeling the doctor over to see the extent of his injuries.

"The trail gave way, señor, and his pony fell off the cliff," answered a Quichua, "we are men who work on the day shift in the mines, as you know. We followed along the same trail and we came to the spot where the pony's hoofs had cut the trail away and looking far below we saw first the pony and then the man lying as if dead. We came upon the pony first. His neck was broken

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and he was dead. The doctor was breathing so we brought him. Is it well, señor?"

"It is well. Go now each man to his home. The company will reward you."

The nurse dried her tears and asked if the doctor was badly injured.

"I'm afraid that the good doctor is done for. His skull is smashed like an egg-shell, several of his ribs are staved in, arms broken and out of joint and his lower limbs fractured. Besides he must be injured internally. It's a wonder to me that there is life left in him. He must have fallen and rolled five hundred feet."

"We can do but little. The nearest doctor is at Oroya. It would take at least ten hours to get him by telegraph, have a special ordered and get him here. That seems to be the only thing to do. I'll get Dan Powers on the phone and tell him to come down here."

IV

"HOLD on!"

It was Harvey Dorman who spoke. He had risen to his feet and stood staring at the unconscious doctor. He still wore Rodin's overcoat. Below this were his bare feet and legs. His hat had fallen to the floor and his hair was so twisted and tangled upon his head that it no longer resembled hair. His face and neck did not betray a close acquaintance with water for several weeks. He was a character at once comical and horrible. The nurse shuddered and drew away.

"What's the matter, seeing things?" asked Rodin roughly.

"No. My head's clear enough now though I am in poor shape physically. This man's badly injured. He must be operated on at once. Get everything ready. We have no time to loose. Otherwise in a few hours he will be dead."

Eugene Rodin looked into the man's face for several minutes. Was it possible that this man was a surgeon? He remembered the general-manager of the railroad he had worked for in the States, that he had seen panhandling on the streets of Mazatlan.

Although his body shook as with a chill the man's eyes were steady as he gazed into those of Rodin.

"You've got nerve enough to kidnap a poor old beach-comber. Have you got nerve enough to help me save this man's life?"

Rodin turned to the nurse.

"I'll take the responsibility. Lock all the doors and don't let any one in here. We are going to take a chance. We have all to gain and nothing to lose. I will assist so you may go back into the ward and look after your patients."

He went to a locker, opened it and took out a long white operating coat. From a drawer he took out a pair of rubber gloves. He had worked as an emergency nurse in Ancon once when he was on his uppers and he knew what was needed. When he had helped Dorman on with the coat he saw it was much too large. It trailed on the floor and the sleeves entirely covered his hands.

"Make me up a strong disinfectant," Dorman ordered as he tossed the coat into a corner. He tottered to the instrument-case and began looking to see what it contained. When Rodin reported that the disinfectant was ready Dorman stripped off his shirt and sponged himself with it from head to waist.

"Got to be careful about infection," he told Rodin, "get a large towel and wrap it around my head and under my chin."

"All right, Doctor."

" 'Doctor' it once was, but now——"

"And now, at least for a while it is 'Doctor' again. I'm at your command. What you say goes. Doctor Dorman what is the next step?"

"Help me on with the gloves."

When he had the gloves on he called for a razor from the case and a shaving-cup. He took the cup in a hand that trembled like an electric vibrator. Rodin drew some water from the hot-water tap and poured in a few drops. Dorman made a lather and began applying this to the temple of the unconscious doctor. He next took up the razor and started as if to shave away the hair.

It was impossible that he could do so with his nerves in the shape they were. The razor fairly bobbed in his hand. He stopped and stared steadily as if he was trying to quiet his nerves by concentration of will. Then he made another effort. Rodin held his breath. The razor clattered to the table.

"Better take a shot in the arm, hadn't you, Doctor?" Rodin suggested.

"No. It hurts a man's view-point. Makes him take too many chances. I never did use any dope during an operation. I know what I'll do. I'll use a spur on

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myself. Nothing like a spur for a jaded nag. Give me that bottle of nitric acid and a wad of absorbent cotton."

He poured the acid on the cotton until it was soaked then he asked for a strip of bandage.

"Now, Mr. Rodin, if you will help me get this ball of cotton right in between my shoulder-blades and this bandage tied in front I think we will be ready to proceed with the operation."

"Great Scott man! You don't intend to do that!"

"Didn't you say you would obey orders? You have good nerve as a kidnaper of harmless old men. Let's see how it is in an operating-room."

Rodin caught the bandage on either side of the acid-soaked cotton and holding it gingerly he pressed it against the back of the surgeon and following the ends around he tied them in front. He averted his eyes as he saw the tiny curl of blue smoke arise over the shoulder of the surgeon. The acid was eating into the flesh. He glanced into Dorman's face.

His lean jaws were clenched so tight that the muscles stood out like marbles. His hands were steady as steel as he felt over Craig's head for the fractures. He took the cup of lather and lathered three large triangles, one on the back and one on either side of the head. He then took the razor and shaved these triangles.

"A spur for a jaded nag," he gritted through his set teeth as he winked wryly at Rodin and then with a hand as steady as that of an etcher on copper he cut loose a flap of scalp and raised it.

"Get a can of ether and stand ready for the first show of awakening. He's in twilight land and we must keep him there."

With a small instrument he took out a "button" of bone and with a tiny pair of long pliers, made for the purpose, he began raising the skull and bending it back into its proper shape. His hands were quick, his touch like that of a feather. He picked a small sliver of bone from a lobe of the brain with the point of a knife.

"That one little piece would have made a raving lunatic of him," he muttered to himself.

Three flaps he cut, three trephines he made and three times he lifted and brought the edges of the skull together. Only a few whiffs of ether they had had to use to keep the patient unconscious.

DAY dawned and still Doctor Harvey Dorman and Eugene Rodin worked patiently. Men came and tried the door and stood without in groups and called within but there was no answer. While he was bringing the bones of compound fracture of a leg together and binding the splints the head of the surgeon sank upon his arms and he sighed with exhaustion.

Rodin stared at him for a moment then he took the bottle of acid and walked around behind him. He pulled back the top of the bandage and dripped some of the acid upon the cotton. He would rather have stood the torture himself than to do it.

Dorman's eyes opened and he groaned slightly.

"A jaded nag needs the spur, son, good work!" he grated as he started with the splints again.

It was eight o'clock when they had finished. Dorman sank fainting to the floor, as the last bandage was placed. Rodin unlocked the door leading into the ward and called to the nurse and gave her some instructions. But first he took off the acid-soaked cotton. Then he asked for a blanket and unlocking the door he wrapped Dorman in its folds and started out with him across his shoulders. One of the crowd that had been standing all night waiting to hear the word from within asked Rodin if "Doc" Craig still survived and when he answered in the affirmative a subdued cheer was raised. Just then an engine and one car stopped on the track above and a man carrying a surgeon's grip hurried down the hill. It was Dr. Ivans from Oroya.

Rodin paused long enough to explain to him. Then he went on up the hill to the *Casa Piedra* with the man he had picked up in the park in Lima upon his shoulders.

It was the next morning that a neatly dressed individual came out of the *Casa Piedra*. He had on Rodin's best suit and Rodin was no "piker" when it came to buying good clothes. His beard was trimmed to a well-pointed V. He walked slowly and there was a suggestion of ambling to his gait. But his head was high as he made his way down the hill toward the hospital. Several Americans met him as he walked along.

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"Good morning, Doctor," they greeted him respectfully.

Within the office was seated Doctor Ivans. As Doctor Dorman entered he arose and grasped him by the hand.

Rodin sat watching with shining eyes.

"Doctor Dorman, I'll take my hat off to you. You are *some* surgeon. With his head crushed as it was Doctor Craig would not have lived three hours. Are you located here in South America somewhere and how did you happen along?"

"No I am not located down here as a surgeon. I have a big practise in Louisville when I get back to it. I have been down here studying the effects of native liquors upon white men."

"By the way, I have often thought of something in connection with that. Is it because these drinks are worse than those to which a white man has been accustomed or is it a question of self-hypnosis caused by believing he is down and can't get up that causes a white man to go so low once he has become addicted to them?"

"Probably both reasons," answered Doctor Harvey Dorman as he went over to feel his patient's pulse.

DANNY POWERS bustled in with a check for two hundred pounds which he forced into Doctor Dorman's hand before inquiring if he would remain at this salary per month until Doctor Craig was able to resume duty.

Fat, good-natured Lindsey Horton, shift boss in the mines, came in the door and grew very red as he forgot the nice little speech of presentation he was going to make but after shoving a buckskin bag bulging with gold pieces into Dorman's hands he stammered that the "boys were glad he had saved 'Doc's' life," and then beat a retreat. They are a good bunch, those Americans up there on "the hill." They are like the fellows over across at Cerro and Fundicion and Oroya and Gollasquisqua and Quishuaquancha and Morococha and all the other copper camps. No man ever gave less than a pound toward anything that any one else started and this time each vied with the other to see how much more it could be.

Finally when Doctor Craig did recover enough so as to be able to know who it was that was attending him he called Doctor Dorman "Harve" and Doctor Dorman called him "Jim." From then on until the special was ordered to take the man who was going back to his practise in Louisville to the ship they talked almost exclusively of happenings years back in a little village out in Bullitt County, Kentucky, that no one had ever heard of. And when the ship sailed from Callao, Dorman broke down and wept on the shoulder of Eugene Rodin as he bade him good-by.

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OFF THE TRAIL

By Robert Russell Strang

ALL day long the little old man and the scarred husky-dog threaded their way among the crowds of excited men that thronged the saloons, gaming places and even the streets—though the thermometer registered seventy degrees of frost. The two seemed inseperable. Frequently the man was hailed as "Dad," and now and then with bated breath and flashing eye he paused to exchange a few diffident words with an acquaintance.

That morning news had arrived in Dawson of a rich strike in the Tanana region of Alaska, and the water in Dad's blood had turned to burning oil—there is always timber in the imagination of the old for the fever to wreak itself upon. He neither paused to eat nor rest; indeed had he been compelled to stay in one spot for five consecutive minutes, the probability is that he would have gone mad. Despite the fire in his veins, however, Dad was a quiet, undemonstrative man, one in whose heart the solitudes of a dozen States and Territories had found echo and response. And he was as unsophisticated as any of nature's other creatures.

Five years before—in the Fall of '97 to be exact—Dad had crossed the Chilcoot Pass. And that he was far from being the last spark in that lightning streak of antagonistic personalities, was proved by the fact that he reached the goal and had staked a hillside on Hunker Creek before the Yukon froze over. During that Winter he had taken out a pay-dump alone. But with the Spring thaw he was seized with the dreaded scurvy and obliged to hire two acquaintances who had just come in, to shovel the dirt into the boxes for him.

After the clean-up, which netted Dad four thousand dollars, they prevailed upon him to grant them a lease of his claim and to take a trip "Outside" to recuperate. Dad assented to the proposed arrangement. He knew the men and trusted them. They were to deposit forty per cent. of all clean-ups to his account in one of the banks. It was, and still is, a common practise.

On his arrival back in Dawson on one of the last boats that Fall, he found not one color to his name in either of the banks. Further inquiry elicited the information that the lessee had cashed sixty-five thousand dollars' worth of gold-dust during the Summer. He went out to the claim. It was gutted and deserted. Hurrying back to town he never rested until he had found "Spade" Williams, the elder of his laymen.

He was seated at a roulette wheel behind a stack of chips. Dad seized and cashed the latter, about a thousand dollars' worth in all, and demanded an explanation. Spade was sorry. They had, he guessed, cleaned up between eighty and ninety thousand. That they had intended to put the last few clean-ups in the bank to his account; but—Dad would understand how it was. A man simply couldn't go around Dawson broke. He would pay him his share out of his next venture. Ed? Oh, he had gone down the river a week before. He didn't know where to.

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As it was only a breach of trust, there seemed nothing for Dad to do but to return to the woods. Fortune had been shy. And at this present moment, aside from the provisions in his cabin, the extent of his finances was bound up in a solitary twenty-dollar gold piece. For many months it had been his emergency fund.

Dad was sensible to the fact that that amount of money wouldn't go far on a trip of seven hundred odd miles and also supply his grub-stake for the ensuing Summer. Well, a man in his condition had to take a chance. What else could the future hold for him? He could never hope to earn sufficient by sawing cord-wood to buy that olive-grove on the Feather River. And, even if he shouldn't get in on the ground floor, he couldn't be much worse off than he was at present. It would be hard on his faithful dog Wolf, but . . . .

He left the Casino and walked up First Avenue in the direction of the A. C. Co. And there was that in his deportment that warned Time to beware, that he was not a man to be thwarted or imposed upon.

"It's our last chance, Wolf," he told the dog as he entered the store.

He purchased a hundred pounds of flour, fifty pounds of rice and ten pounds of salt, and with the fifty cents that remained of his twenty, a cigar. Then he went home, hitched up Wolf and hauled the grub-stake to his cabin. The remainder of the evening was spent in packing up the accretion of a lifetime, girding his loins for the strife of the trail, and instilling Wolf with a similar spirit. The latter understood not a little of what was said to him.

At five o'clock next morning, with a "Haw there, you Wolf," Dad slipped down the bank to the Yukon and disappeard into the crystallized moonlight. Some hours later the moonlight became merged with the drab daylight for a while, but the moving gray speck in the measureless white went forward like a mechanical creation, a sort of reluctant trot. Early in the afternoon the moon again became mistress of the heavens, and she was almost overhead before Dad finally called it a day.

By that time, man and beast were indistinguishable from their surroundings. And when Dad stood still and looked back over the trail he was not unlike a statue cut from a block of ice. Patting Wolf, whose eyes seemed to peer out of the atmosphere, he essayed to speak, but was prevented by the icicles in his beard. Wolf wagged his tail feebly and curled up in the snow.

THERE was little difference between Dad and Wolf when, six weeks later, they trotted into the new diggings. Gaunt and stomachless they were. On that stampede the spirit of the North exacted a terrible toll. There were no trails, or rather there were a hundred of them, each party, according to the way it read the imperfect map, making one for itself. The consequence of this was that many never came within hundreds of miles of the new El Dorado, but went to work prospecting on a likely-looking creek on the way or turned back. When they came to a point where the trails diverged Dad wisely left the choice to Wolf, who sensed the one over which the majority had traveled.

Their entrance into what later became the city of Fairbanks caused no little stir, and it was conceded on all sides that they had taken the "im" out of impossible. Many cautiously asked Dad how he was "fixed"—to all of which he replied that he was "fat." And the answer would have been the same if he had eaten his last bean three days before. He still had grub sufficient to last him till Spring.

Though Dad discovered that every creek was staked within a radius of fifty miles of the discovery, he did not lose hope—couldn't afford to—and after a rest of a few days to doctor up Wolf's feet, he struck out for the diggings proper. For two weeks he trailed up and down the creeks in the vicinity: Ester, Goldstream, Pedro, Cleary and many others, but all to no purpose. Then he followed the trail over the divide to Fairbanks Creek, and here he stumbled upon what he sought. It was only a fraction between two claims, forty feet one way, and the width of the creek valley the other.

Many had passed it by, no doubt owing to the denseness of the spruce in the vicinity. The owners on either side of him were already well toward bed-rock in their shafts, but at some distance—a creek placer gold claim is 1320 feet up and down stream by 660 feet in width, in all twenty acres—Dad was satisfied; he sensed that beneath his feet lay a fortune.

Two weeks later, while thawing moss to calk his shack, a man shuffled up, struggled out of a pack and flung himself down by the

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fire. Wolf strolled toward him, the hair erect upon his shoulders and his upper lip drawn back in a snarl. Dad came out of the cabin to investigate; the stranger gave a start, took a step in the direction of his pack, changed his mind and faced the old man.

"Hello, Dad," he cried cordially, his eyes moving rapidly from the dog to its owner. "Who'd have thought to come across *you* in this country! Is this your claim?"

"Hello, Ed." A cloud flitted across Dad's face. "Back, Wolf," he commanded, as the dog edged nearer, his mane and tail rigid. "Yes, this is my ground—what there is of it. Where did you come from?"

"Rampart, Dad," he replied ingratiatingly. "All in too, and broke."

Dad's eyes narrowed and he gazed across the creek.

"You don't mind if I stick around for a day or two, do you, Dad? I'm dead tired, and for three days I've been bumming my grub. You know what that means in a new camp with food scarce."

He made a tentative offer of friendliness to Wolf, but the dog backed away snarling.

Dad faced him.

"Have you forgotten what you and Spade Williams did to me in the Dawson County?" His voice trembled.

"No, Dad, I ain't; like a lot of others I thought then that the country was full of gold. I've learned my lesson, Dad, and I'm willin' to do the right thing."

At that moment the owner of the claim above came running toward them, a gold pan held horizontally in one hand.

"There, Dad, look at that!" he cried, holding up the pan for inspection.

Dad looked, and the trees started to dance and the earth to rise and fall like the billows of the sea.

"First pan from bed-rock. Almost two dollars in it," came the man's voice as from the peak of a mountain.

Dad passed a hand across his eyes, but the orange-trees and the olive-grove remained. The man was dodging between the trees on the way to the claim below. He sat down by the fire and jabbed aimlessly at a chunk of frozen moss. The curtain had risen, and the future tapered away goldenly to a rosy sunset. Ed Carr's shifty eyes had narrowed and settled upon the bent figure opposite.

"You can't work this ground yourself, Dad," he presently whined. "I'm as good a miner as the next, I guess; and the least I can do is offer to help you. I don't want any wages; and I'll do the digging." He licked his thick lips. "It'll help to pay off what I owe you."

Dad started; then he looked straight at Ed for a few tense moments.

"Ed, your father and I rocked out gold on the Feather River before you were born. He was a good partner. You talk straight. You get the chance to make good."

He lifted the pot of rice from the fire and led the way to the cabin.

"You'll never regret it, Dad," Ed declared as they broke bread.

Three weeks later they struck bed-rock and pay, the gold in the first pan weighing about a quarter of an ounce. Dad trod on air. The pans were not so rich after that and for the following reason: the bed-rock was composed of powdered slate, furrowed like the surface of a pond in a breeze, the gold lying like wheat on the up-slope of each wave. Thus, today there would be a thin line of yellow along the face, and tomorrow a blank.

Ed developed the drift according to these conditions. The first thing he did every morning after shoveling back the waste gravel that had fallen from the roof during the night from the heat of the wood fires, was to take the gold pan in one hand and, with the sharp point of his steel candlestick, go along the face and scrape the gold into the pan. This he washed in the sump-hole every night, put it into a sack and cached it in the waste pile. Once a week or so he sent up one of the rich streaks, and invariably drew the attention of Dad to the richness of the pay-dirt.

It had been the first of March when they struck bed-rock, and by the fifteenth of April, when gas began to accumulate underground from the heat of the fires and the rotten vegetation, they had hoisted fifteen hundred buckets of pay-dirt which Dad judged ought to go two dollars to the bucket. Ed was skeptical.

"A man should always cut his estimation of a pay-dump in two, Dad. I never knew one yet that came up to expectations. You can never tell until it lies in the gold-scales."

While waiting for the water to run they dug their ditch and made half a dozen sluice-boxes. What it had taken six weeks to thaw and hoist, they shoveled through the boxes

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in three days. Dried, blowed and weighed, the clean-up netted fifteen hundred dollars.

"Well," Dad remarked with a sigh, "I'm lucky to have that much."

He weighed out ten ounces, poured it into the blower and shoved it across to Ed.

"I guess that will hold you till you get a job with some big outfit for the Summer," he said.

Ed pushed it back to him.

"No, no, Dad; half of that will be quite enough," he protested. And although Dad pleaded with him to take it, Ed remained firm.

"It's mighty good of you, Ed," Dad cried as the latter put the gold in his pocket.

"I'll come back in the Fall, Dad. I guess I'll get a job with some outfit that's open cutting their ground. Don't let any water run into the shaft—" he cautioned—"and that will save us sinking a new one. I guess the fraction can be cleaned out of the same hole. I'll go over the divide tonight. It's better traveling than in the daytime."

They had supper; Dad went to bed, and Ed took his departure. But about midnight he crawled through the moss to the shaft, descended the ladder, placed a poke of dust like a foot of bologna in his hip pocket, climbed out again and sneaked away through the woods.

NEXT night he staggered into the California saloon in Fairbanks howling like a wolf. It was the open season. The Winter's gold had been harvested. The gray days were being painted red. The new crop of embryo millionaires were lavish. The new camp had made good. The earth had given of her riches, and thereby created a new heaven. Calling upon everybody to drink, Ed placed his poke on the bar as earnest of his ability to defray the cost.

Among those who responded was a tall bearded man with a harelip. He fairly rushed at Ed, hefted the poke, then wrung his hand.

"Oh, you mole," he cried jovially. "Ten thousand at least. Where did you make the strike?"

Ed gazed a long moment in the face of his old partner, Spade Williams. "None o' your —— business," he rejoined surlily. "Drink all you've a mind to, but ask no questions."

He turned his shoulder to the other.

Spade tapped it.

"Huh!" he snarled. "So this is the way you greet an old partner. Keep your drink; but a word in your ear; I'll make it my business to find out where you got it. Savvy?"

He turned away and stood with his back to the opposite wall.

Ed evidently gave some consideration to Spade's threat, for after the drink he walked back to where he stood with a pacific grin.

"No use actin' like a bear, Spade," he jested. "Let's you and I have a drink all by ourselves."

He seized his arm and started in the direction of a box. Spade shook the hand free.

"Ed Carr," he growled, his eyes snapping, "I've known you all my life, and besides being a thief and a liar, you're the most selfish specimen of man-hog I've ever met. Get away from me before I knock you down."

Ed looked from right to left, his eyes lowered. It was a trick he had. Stepping close to Spade he whispered a few words in his ear. The latter's eyes lit up and he became all attention.

"Well," he finally made answer, "if you put it that way— we'll let bygones be bygones."

They shook hands, had a drink together and left the saloon arm in arm, Ed loudly proclaiming eternal friendship.

IT WAS well along in September when Ed again showed up on the fraction on Fairbanks Creek. Wolf, as before, greeted him with a snarl. After explaining at great length, and with many unnecessary oaths, what bad luck he had experienced all Summer, he went on to say how he had run across Spade Williams in Fairbanks a few days before; that he had just drifted in from the Dahl River country where he had been prospecting for two years; how he had been sick, out of luck and wanted to come out and work with them that Winter.

"Three of us, Dad," he summed up in conclusion, "could clean out the fraction this Winter, then you could go Outside for good next Spring and settle down on that grove of yours. Like myself he's willin' to work for his board; for we both feel that we'll never be able otherwise to pay back what we owe you."

Dad scratched Wolf's ear for a few moments.

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"Well," he presently declared, "it says a hole lot for both of you that you are illin' to square up an old account. That, think, is the hall-mark of an honest man. ure, go back to town and bring him out."

Ed went to Fairbanks on the following norning and returned three days later with pade. It was significant that Wolf thought ven less of the latter, if that were possible, han he did of Ed. Spade greeted Dad oberly.

"I was as tickled as Punch, Dad," he aid, "to hear that you had struck another ittle patch o' corn. Believe me, I'll do all I an to help get it out o' the ground."

Dad assured both of his gratefulness. And next morning they started to cut wood or the Winter's fires.

It was well for Dad that he had had a good rest that Summer, for otherwise he never would have been able to hoist from both men. As it was he was obliged to go to bed immediately after supper, but with the added rest on Sunday he managed to keep the pace. The two were now doing exactly what Ed had done the Winter before, but over a much larger face. They got the sniping down to a science. Occasionally they sent up a good pan of dirt for Dad to wash, and at least once a week sent up one of the rich thaws. As Spade put it:

"About five thousand will hit Dad just right. That will buy him all the oranges and olives he'll be likely to eat the rest of his days. He'd only have to leave the rest to some gink who'd paint Frisco red for a few weeks. We can do that ourselves, eh?" And Ed agreed with him.

The short days gradually lengthened until the sun seemed to blister the snow. Then one day a chinook wandered up from the Southland and in two hours changed the face of nature. For the trees, that for months had stood like marble sphinxes, had shaken off their immemorial raiment. Dad felt the marrow thaw in his bones, and Wolf gamboled like a pup around the pay-dump. Not so Ed and Spade.

"We got to get a wiggle on us to clean out that back corner," declared Spade. "There's at least three hundred cubic feet of pay to hoist yet, and the best pay of all at that."

"I'm gonna take no chances," Ed growled.

By this time, about the tenth of April, the upper side of the fraction had been cleaned out to the line of the claim above. Early in the Winter they had worked up to the rimrock on the east, and there remained but a triangular piece of ground on the southwest, the rimrock of the latter being exposed for more than half the depth of the fraction. With that out, the drift would be a rectangle forty by a hundred and twenty feet, and save at the far end where the smoke and gas hung, between four and five feet in height. It was this dome-shaped hole in the roof that was worrying Ed.

"We can stick it out five days more at least," declared Spade lightly. "If there's anything left in this drift then, I'll eat it. Why, man, there's five thousand dollars for each of us in that corner yet."

On the night of the fourteenth, long after Dad had gone to bed, they stole over to the shaft and hoisted out their booty, three long sacks of dust, and hid them beneath the pile of tailing rocks washed from the dump of the Winter before. It was the only spot in the vicinity from which the snow had entirely disappeared.

"Gee, but I'm glad to see this safe on top," quoth Ed. "That roof is liable to come down any minute. We should have left a pillar——"

"I've got a picture of myself leaving a pillar in ground like this," Spade interposed. "One day more! Just think, Ed. Less'n a month from now Dad will be on his way to the Outside, and we'll be commandin' the musicians in the Monte Carlo dance-hall to play 'The Good Old Summer-Time.' And they'll neither be night nor day for weeks. Wow!"

They stole back to the cabin and to bed.

On reaching the face of the drift on the following morning Ed waited but a moment, then fled back to the shaft bottom.

"What's the matter?" demanded Spade.

"That pile of waste from the hole in the roof," Ed replied.

"Pshaw, there won't any more come down. We can fan some of the heat away from the face with our coats. Come on, don't be a quitter. Think on what you can do with five thousand dollars!"

Ed reluctantly returned to the face where for a few minutes they fanned the air vigorously, then set to work clearing the waste from the skidway. An hour later they started to hoist.

Everything went as usual in the forenoon, and Spade laughed at Ed for his fears. When, however, they came up for dinner they received a shock that drove the blood from their hearts. Wolf was lying on the

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exact spot where they had hidden the dust. Dad also had noticed this, and laughed heartily at the dog's unusual capers.

"We've got to move that stuff tonight," Spade rapped out, "and kill Wolf."

"But our tracks in the snow on the hillside," objected Ed.

"We've got to move it, I tell yuh," Spade ground between his teeth.

"But don't you see—Wolf will follow our tracks everywhere. If we move it, we've got to keep on goin' over the divide," Ed argued.

"Then we'll keep on goin' tonight," Spade retorted decisively.

They entered the cabin and sat down to dinner, but their appetites had vanished.

"Anything the matter with the mulligan?" Dad queried. "You ain't eatin' anything."

"Our stomachs are full of gas, Dad," Spade offered in reply. "I'm glad it's the last day." A wish instantly responded to by his companions.

After the dishes were washed Ed strolled to the window. Wolf was clawing ineffectually at one of the boulders above the treasure. Ed shuddered, then turned to Dad.

"Two hours' hoistin' will about finish us, Dad," he observed. "So if you want to lie down for an hour—" He flashed Spade a significant look. The latter's eyes narrowed comprehendingly.

"I don't mind if I take a little nap myself," Spade said with a yawn.

"Well," replied Dad. "I feel sort of excited—the last day, you know—and anything but sleepy, but I guess a rest wouldn't go bad."

As he spoke he climbed into his bunk and closed his eyes. After a glance of understanding at Ed, Spade did likewise. Ed picked up a bucket and casually announced that he'd get some snow for water. He did that; but instead of re-entering the cabin he set the bucket down at the door and started for the tailing pile.

"Poor Wolf," he cried in a coaxing tone as he approached the latter. "Good ol' dog."

Wolf stopped his pawing and growled menacingly.

Ed looked about him for a weapon. Half of a dried sapling that had been a brace for a sluice-box lay near. He picked it up, swung it over his shoulder and rushed at the dog. The latter reared on his hind legs and, as the blow fell, caught the stick in his mouth, gave his head a sudden twist and tore it out of Ed's grasp. Dropping it instantly he gave a sharp warning bark, bared his fangs and settled back on his haunches for a spring. Ed retreated a few steps and picked up two rocks. Wolf sprang and just missed Ed's throat. He turned and ran, arriving at the cabin door as Dad appeared upon the threshold. Wolf was returning to the tailing pile, pausing every few steps to throw a snarl over his shoulder.

"What's the matter?" Dad queried.

Ed gave a sickly grin.

"I just thought I'd find out what Wolf had got down there by the tailing pile," he rejoined, "but, huh, he wouldn't let me near him. I'll bet he buried a bone there last Summer," he concluded with a laugh in which Dad joined heartily.

"Wolf is mighty hard to please in some ways," he stated a moment later, leading the way to the shaft.

Murderous glances passed between Ed and Spade on the way hither.

"He'll have it clawed out before we get out of the shaft," whispered Ed.

He nodded toward Wolf, industriously nosing aside a large boulder. They gazed desperately at each other.

When directly opposite the tailing pile Dad stooped to tie the lacing of his moccasin. Simultaneously two hands were drawn back to strike. There was a flash of a lean gray form. Spade lay on his back in the trail, Wolf standing over him. Dad wheeled.

"Back, Wolf!" he shouted. He seized him by the mane and threw him aside.

"That dog is goin' crazy, Dad," panted Spade, rising to his feet. "You ought to kill him—kill 'im right now," he raged.

"It's a puzzle to me," returned Dad. "He never deliberately attacked anybody before. I'll see tonight what's the matter with him."

"Chain him up anyhow," urged Spade. "I wouldn't have him loose another minute. He's liable to bite anybody that comes down the trail."

Dad looked at Wolf. He had a habit of throwing back his head and, as it were, laughing in his throat. He did that now.

"I don't understand it," confessed Dad. "But he ain't crazy. I'll attend to him after we're through hoisting."

This the conspirators had to be content with, for Wolf watched their every movement. They descended the shaft as if go-

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ng to their doom, lighted the candles along the skidway, then faced each other. What each saw in the other's face increased his terror a thousandfold.

"Well, we're in for it, I guess," Ed finally chattered.

"Couldn't you have laid the brute out some way or another?" Spade retorted.

"We shouldn't have put it there at all, I suppose. But it was the only spot on the claim where the snow had melted. Come to think of it, he'd have tracked us no matter where we'd have put it. And we couldn't leave it down here, for the water is liable to seep in any minute. Even now the ground has sagged around the shaft with the weight of the dump and the heat of the air."

"Well, our only chance is to get this dirt out as quick as we can," cried Spade, drawing a bucket up to the face and seizing a shovel.

DURING the next half hour Dad didn't get a moment's breathing spell. No sooner did the empty bucket touch the bottom than a full one was hooked on. At the end of that time he contracted a stitch in his side, and sat down on an empty bucket until it should pass. Ed, who was dragging the buckets from the face, waited a full minute for an empty one, cursing meanwhile. Then he called up the shaft and demanded to know what the matter was. Dad told him, adding that he'd be all right in a minute. Ed returned to the face and told Spade. They sat down to wait. Now and again they looked along the lit alleyway to the shaft bottom to see if a bucket had landed. At the end of two minutes Spade rose.

"I can't stand this any longer. I'm goin' up to rap him over the head and——"

The great slab of gravel fell with the suddenness of a meteor and the stealthiness of an owl's flight. Dad, who at that moment was hanging an empty bucket on the windlass hood, was thrown back ten feet by the force of the air-blast.

Recovering, he sprang back to the shaft mouth where, after a moment of awful silence, he called first Ed and then Spade by name.

During the stillness that followed the surging of the blood past his ears was like the rhythmic blows of a trip-hammer to the old man. There was no reply from below.

Realizing the futility of descending the shaft—he had become so light-headed on the only occasion he had tried to go down that it was with difficulty he had crawled back to the surface—and aware that succor could only come through him, he slipped down the pay-dump and started up the creek for help.

As he rounded the tailing pile he almost fell over Wolf. Swinging aside with the intention of passing, Wolf at that moment grabbed a leg of his overalls and brought him to a sudden halt.

Looking down Dad saw three large pokes of dust. From one of them that Wolf had bitten through with his teeth had trickled a little cone of the precious metal.

Dad drew a gnarled hand across his eyes.

Wolf endeavored to push one of the pokes to his feet with his nose, but, that being too much for him, he looked up in his master's face for a sign of approval.

"Good—good old friend," Dad quavered, patting the scarred head.

Wolf responded by placing his paws on Dad's breast and speaking husky fashion.

Then with a start, Dad hurriedly resumed his way.

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THE KILLING of LIEUTENANT CARTWRIGHT

By Guy D. Wilson

HOBSON lay prone on the muddy railroad embankment. His feet, covered by three inches of tropical rainfall, throbbed indignantly at the twenty-five miles under heavy marching order, just completed.

Hobson had performed, with five hundred other U. S. marines, a feat that was to be the boast of the corps for years—cutting ways through underbrush, sloshing through rainy season marshes and at last had arrived, at midnight, ahead of Murrua's army of rebels and was ready to defend the American-owned railway from insurrecto capture.

But Hobson was oblivious alike to the glory of the military achievement and to the discomforts that resulted; so much so that he lay now as he had marched, his field-belt not loosened, despite its heavy load of steel jackets. He felt not the chafe of the two bandoleers and two hundred rounds of ammunition. The forty-eight pound pack was light in comparison to the weight that had settled upon Hobson's mind during the past year, increasing daily until its culmination, but a few short hours before, when he was transformed from a human, with a soul and hope, to a cold thing, numb physically, mentally and morally.

But one thought lived in Hobson's mind. He must kill Lieutenant Cartwright.

It was no passionate mental declaration, no sudden anger. Hobson could see now that the decision had been years in forming. Perhaps, but for today's occurrence at the barracks, before the sudden movement to the interior, it could have been avoided. But now, Cartwright must die.

To the right of Hobson, the regulation fifteen inches "as skirmishers" distance, a marine swore at the order which prohibited smoking. Wet, weary and muddy, the men were denied the comfort of tobacco—for Murrua was supposed to be laboring under the impression that the nearest marine was sleeping soundly at the Cubrera barracks, and the flare of a match might prevent the wily insurrecto general from walking into the ambush.

Murrua had taken both ends of the railroad without trouble and it was his intention to make his possession more secure by entrenching along the line, and then to rush his troops by railway into the capital. He might have gone on with his plans without Uncle Sam troubling himself about the matter at all, had the railway not been owned by American capitalists. That is where the marines came in.

A late moon in a cloudless sky offered a striking contrast to miserable conditions below. Every star was reflected a thousand times in pools of water surrounded by rank undergrowth.

As far as the eye could reach in either direction, khaki-clad marines lay or sat on the soft earth thrown up to support the flimsy tracks. The men were hidden, despite the brightness of the moon, from the opposite side, the direction from which Murrua and his fifteen hundred Spics were marching.

Occasionally a man swore at conditions, quietly but forcefully.

Murrua, called "The Owl" because he made all his important moves under cover

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of darkness, was expected at about daybreak. The marines had beaten him by six hours.

Tonight was to be the end for Hobson. He would kill Cartwright, then . . . As if by a cinematograph his experiences of three years and a half in the Marine Corps were pictured in his mind—three years and six months of hell, made so by Cartwright. Cartwright had insulted, abused, tortured him until Hobson would have rebelled months ago, but for the near expiration of his enlistment—and Maggie.

Now, with but six months to serve, the letter, which meant all, hope or despair, was destroyed. Cartwright had done it. It had been the ultimate, the most exquisite of all Cartwright's torture. He had denied Hobson the privilege of knowing Maggie's last words. Had she asked for him? Had she sent him any message? God, he might never know. He clenched his fists until the contraction reached his huge pectoral muscles and a button flew from his tight-fitting blouse.

Four years before John Hobson thought he was the happiest man on earth. As "traffic cop" on one of New York's busiest corners he gloried in his perfect record on the force, gloried in his six feet one inch of trained physique; but most of all, he gloried in Maggie. Maggie was "at the head of the ribbons" in Stacey's big department store. Hobson and Maggie were engaged.

Then came the epidemic. Maggie, in all the health of youth was stricken. For two months she hung between life and death, and John Hobson grew gaunt and haggard. Finally the doctor at the hospital where she lay called Hobson in and told him Maggie would live—but she would be a cripple for life.

When Maggie was able to see Hobson they had a never-to-be-forgotten talk. John pled with her to marry him and go, as they had so often planned, to a little home in the country.

"We can be happy, dear, you and I, even if——"

But Maggie would not.

John Hobson visited her every day for months, and grew more haggard. His shoulders, once so broad and straight grew toward each other and stooped. His eyes were bloodshot. One day Maggie detected liquor on his breath.

The next day came the ultimatum.

"You must not see me again, John. I will never become your wife, to be a drag. I have enough money to keep me as long as I live. I had saved it you know, for—us."

Again John pleaded but Maggie's only concession was—

"At the end of five years if you still—well, we will talk it over then, but try to forget, John, dear, it is best."

She agreed to allow him to write once a month, and said she would answer his letters. That was all.

John took heavily to drink and was suspended from the force. He endeavored to take a new hold, failed and joined the Marine Corps. Six months after he entered the service Maggie wrote an encouraging letter.

"I am improving. An operation may be possible some day, but the doctor said it was only a hope."

THE outfit to which Hobson belonged was ordered to Colovia when that chameleon republic showed signs of a particularly violent eruption which threatened American interests. That was a year ago but the troops had remained in barracks at Cubrera, the principal seaport town of the republic.

Hobson had suffered Lieutenant Cartwright's antipathy from the first days of his "hitch." Cartwright was one of that type of commissioned officers, found only occasionally in any branch of the United States military service, but particularly scarce in the Marines; a young snob, graduated from Annapolis, small in stature and in soul, knowing his own extreme limitations, and endeavoring to cover them at the expense of his inferiors.

Hobson was big, conscientious and wholesome; therefore he was picked readily as a butt by the petty Cartwright.

And so, sprawled in tropical mud, Private John Hobson reviewed the indignities he had suffered at the hands of Cartwright, his company commander. He recalled, how just after he had left the recruit depot, he was sent to Haiti, where he first came under the lieutenant.

Cartwright had sized up Hobson's big frame.

"New York policeman, eh? Well forget it. You've got to work in this service. It's not like policing."

In daily drill Hobson became the foil for all Cartwright's shallow sarcasm. Once,

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early in his enlistment Hobson "fell in" with a shirt-button off. He suffered an insulting rebuke in ranks and did extra duty. One abuse followed another.

Hobson bore it all unflinchingly, but drew within himself. The men realized the true conditions, but all offers of sympathy were rebuffed, and Hobson was put down as a grouch. As his enlistment drew toward its end, Cartwright's insults were shed with ease. They would soon end forever, and then freedom—and Maggie.

Three weeks before Murrua launched his rebellion, Maggie had written that the operation was to be performed. It offered a chance.

"I may be able to walk, John—think of it. To really live, and if you still care—but you do. A thousand times you have written it and said it. But John, the doctor was frank. I may not be cured. I may not stand the operation. Yes dear—he says it means one or the other, life, full, happy life—or death. No more mere existence, John, dear. I begged so hard, that they have agreed to operate.

"You have refused to be free, John, God bless you, so now it is to be settled one way or the other. This may be my last letter, but if the operation is a success, you will be with me in only another half year. I know you will be brave, my big boy. They say I am, oh so brave."

Hobson looked back on the following three weeks which had been filled with agony and hope. Only a few hours ago a letter had come, a week before he had expected—too soon. He recalled how his hand had shook as Sergeant McShay called his name, and he had reached for the letter. It was just after midday "chow". The men had returned from the mess-hall to their quarters.

Before looking at the handwriting, Hobson knew the letter was not written by Maggie. He never received other mail. This was not her simple stationery, which he knew so well. A glance proved his fears. The writing was in a feminine hand, but strange. He had stood dazed a moment.

Breaking, it seemed to Hobson, a death-like silence, came the notes of a bugle.

"Call to Arms!"

He heard the words repeated by his comrades, although his mind, strangely alert while his body was paralyzed, recognized the call.

Trained men all, every marine sprang to his bunk, seized his rifle and field-belt. All but Hobson. He stood motionless, gazing at the letter in his hand.

He heard the rattle of a saber in front of him. Without looking, Hobson knew it was Cartwright: Cartwright at this time. His presence was all that was needed to make the agony complete.

"Hobson!"

Training is strong. Mechanically Private Hobson came to attention, with the letter in his hand at his side.

For once justified, Cartwright gave full vent to his temper. Seizing the letter from Hobson's hand he glanced at the handwriting.

"So, a woman's call is stronger than the call to arms. —— you, this will mean a general court-martial, you good-for-nothing dog."

He tore the letter into bits and threw them in Hobson's face.

"Fall out, you bum. Get your rifle and fall out!"

Hobson was too dazed to do otherwise than to obey.

The rest was hazy in Hobson's mind, the getting ready for the rush, the long cruel grind through wild, wet country. But now he realized all.

Nothing remained in life for him but to kill Cartwright. Maggie was dead and through Cartwright he had been denied her last word.

The Spics must be almost due. Daybreak was but two hours away. Hobson grew impatient. He wanted action—action that would give him an opportunity to kill Cartwright.

There was a low word of command. The warning was passed down the skirmish line. Tense and with rifles ready, the marines flattened out along the embankment. Murrua and his insurrectors were coming. Suddenly there was the crack of rifles accompanied by a burst of flame seemingly unending on either side a thousand yards in front of the waiting marines.

Murrua was not to be ambushed. By that wireless-like means of communication among the "neutral" natives, the information had reached the rebel leader that the gringos held the railroad. His forces outnumbering the defenders three to one, he had decided on one of his always successful night attacks.

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From out of the line of trees ahead, Hobson saw the Spics in the bright moonlight, advancing in surprisingly well-ordered rushes. Then came the clatter of a machine gun from the trees.

No, Murrua was not to be surprised. The tables were almost turned.

The marines were ordered to advance from behind the embankment to a ditch, bordering the right of way. They did it with a yell.

Hobson listened for Cartwright. The command for the company to advance had been repeated by Sergeant McShay; old "Bull-dog" McShay, veteran of many a battle with the Spics.

Where was Cartwright? Hobson knew he was receiving his baptism of fire. How was he behaving?

At last he heard the lieutenant's voice. What was he saying? He seemed to be giving commands, but not in his usual way. There was lacking the confidence of his parade-ground tones. The voice that carried so well at reviews could hardly be heard; and he was repeating something over and over. It was the order already executed. McShay had seen to it that it was executed.

Hobson knew—Cartwright was a coward. He was in a blue funk. The men knew. He heard them swear.

"It's a good thing Captain Porter's in command," thought Hobson.

Porter's bellow could be heard away off to the left, above the roar of the rifles.

Another advance for the marines was ordered; to an arroya a hundred yards ahead. Hobson hung back, waiting for Cartwright. He wanted to be near him to gloat in the lieutenant's cowardice—and to kill.

THE lieutenant came, saber drawn but reeling like a drunken man. He was beside Hobson. Suddenly the officer threw both hands to his head and sank with a cry. Blood burst through his fingers and flowed down his forearm. He had been struck about the head.

Hobson stopped. He cursed the fate that had robbed him of his vengeance. Stooping he jerked the lieutenant's hands from his face. The wound was on Cartwright's forehead and was but a scratch. He had fainted from fright. With disgust, unmingled with pity, Hobson swung Cartwright's slight form across his shoulders.

With his rifle swinging by its sling, Hobson struck out toward the right flank of the firing-line a hundred yards ahead. He would take Cartwright away—by himself, and revel in the officer's agony of fear. He would tell the cowardly lieutenant of his intentions and make deliberate preparation to kill him.

Should he use his bayonet—the bayonet over which Cartwright had so often rubbed his white-gloved fingers at inspections in hopes of detecting a bit of rust or oil? Or should he send a steel-jacketed bullet crashing through his brain? Whichever it was to be Cartwright should know beforehand, and should be given full time to suffer.

A marine, a member of Hobson's company stumbled along, one arm limp. Seeing the officer seemingly badly wounded, being borne out of danger he called—

"Good work, Hobson. Need any help?"

Hobson snarled and told the marine to mind his business.

The firing ahead was an unbroken roar. The rattle of Murrua's machine gun was now well to the left; in fact Hobson had drawn far to the right of all action. The marines had thrown their right wing in toward the machine gun and had partially flanked the Spics. But the firing seemed to be drawing closer to Hobson. He knew the marines were falling back. The Americans were being beaten by the machine gun.

A khaki-clad figure staggered across Hobson's path. The man was screaming horribly. Hobson stopped beside a clump of bushes and flung Cartwright into a low spot. The lieutenant groaned and sat up, but fell back, his hands covering his eyes as if to shut out the sight of the battle. He whimpered like a baby.

A trumpeter reeled by, the side of his face gone. He fell near Hobson and lay still.

Hobson straightened up and looked about him. The Americans were retiring rapidly before the incessant fire of the machine gun. Murrua's troops were well hidden by the brush while the marines now a long wavering line, were plainly visible in the bright moonlight, retreating in orderly fashion, a few yards at a time.

Hobson forgot Cartwright. He forgot his vengeance. Like fire, the fighting instinct came uppermost. He started forward and stumbled over the form of the trumpeter. Mechanically he picked up the

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bugle dropped by the dead lad. Straight ahead he went, faster until he was running straight ahead. There was firing directly to his left. Then he realized he was parallel with Murrua's lines. On he went. The machine-gun rattle was now over his left shoulder. Then he left obliqued and after seeming hours he was exactly in the rear of the hated rattle.

Oh, for a hundred men.

A hundred! Why a hundred? One marine was worth a hundred Spics. He had heard it ever since he had joined the corps. He could see the rebel machine gun crew, the "greasy bunch" that was slaughtering his companions. The gun crew was protected from the front by the shadows of the brushes but to Hobson they were in plain view. The marine himself was hidden from them by a second row of trees. He raised his rifle—no it was not his rifle—it was the bugle. He had forgotten he had carried it.

But the bugle wouldn't shoot; why had he brought it? Subconsciously he pressed the mouthpiece to his lips. Where had he blown a bugle before? He remembered, it was in the barracks in Haiti, young Anderson, poor little homesick boy, had taught Hobson to sound the calls.

Hobson blew "charge."

"Charge, —— it, charge. There's only one of you, but you're worth a hundred Spics. Charge!"

He cast aside the bugle and brought his rifle to his hip. On the run he inserted clip after clip of shells and pulled the trigger as rapidly as the Springfield mechanism would permit. He took no aim. He didn't even raise the piece to his shoulder. A veritable stream of fire spurted from the muzzle of the rifle.

Straight toward the machine gun Hobson rushed. It might have been ten men charging; it might have been a hundred. Hobson emerged from the line of trees but the moon by now was on the horizon. The Spics were silhouetted plainly against the bright orb, but to them Hobson was invisible. The flashes of the rifle which seemed a hundred was all that was offered as a target. The Spics had heard the bugle call from the rear.

The machine gun ceased suddenly. The Spics were panic-stricken. Forward they rushed, thoroughly frightened at one of the feared gringo flank movements.

The marines had heard the bugle call, also. They didn't understand, but when the rebels broke from cover they fell flat on the ground and raked the frightened greasers with a deadly rifle fire.

It became a rout. Murrua's army stampeded like cattle and all were rounded up before the sun peeked above the swamps.

Hobson staggered on. What was it he was to do? Oh, yes, he must kill Cartwright. Where was Cartwright? Now he remembered; to his left.

There were men about Hobson. There was Captain Porter. The battle was over, therefore he must render honors. But he couldn't salute. Why couldn't he salute? He couldn't raise his rifle.

Porter said something about Cartwright. Yes, he would kill Cartwright. Give him time. He staggered on. Captain Porter walked beside him. He saw the man from his own company whose arm was limp. The man said something to Captain Porter about Cartwright.

"Hobson carried the lieutenant out of danger from the machine-gun fire."

Sure, that was right. He hadn't wanted the machine gun to kill Cartwright. He wanted to do that himself. Porter understood. Porter was a' right.

On he went to his left. Porter went also. Well, let him come if he wanted to see it well done. He would kill Cartwright. But why couldn't he lift his rifle? How could he kill Cartwright if he couldn't lift his rifle?

He was wet, awfully wet. It was blood—he was bloody about the chest, and he felt a trickle down his back. He was shot through and through. He knew that, now. That was good, it would save the trouble of a court-martial. No it was bad. He might not be able to kill Cartwright.

There was the clump of brush. There was the dead trumpeter. There was Cartwright. Yes, right at his feet. He raised the muzzle of his rifle enough to rest it on Cartwright's chest. He hadn't strength enough to work the bolt.

Cartwright moved. He groaned. Hobson saw the lieutenant's face was ashen. He still whimpered. He groveled in the dirt. Ugh! What a coward.

Captain Porter jerked Cartwright to his feet with an oath. Hobson heard him say—

"—— yellow dog."

Porter was right. Cartwright was a yellow dog. But Porter was taking Cartwright away and Hobson couldn't kill him. Hobson tried to curse Porter. Porter must

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want to kill Cartwright himself, but that was his, Hobson's, privilege.

HOBSON turned over and opened his eyes. A hospital apprentice was taking his temperature.

"How do you feel now, old man? Gee! You're a lucky guy. Charge a machine gun by your lonesome and get away with it alive, save a lieutenant that wasn't worth saving and wake up to get a letter from your best girl. Here it is. Want me to read it for you? I guess not. You're not too weak for that, eh Hobson?"

What was the fellow talking about? Save a lieutenant! Why he had tried to kill him. And a letter from his girl. Maggie was dead.

The apprentice thrust a letter into Hobson's hands and helped him to open it.

"Tolerably weak at that, Hobson. For four days we didn't know whether you would pull through."

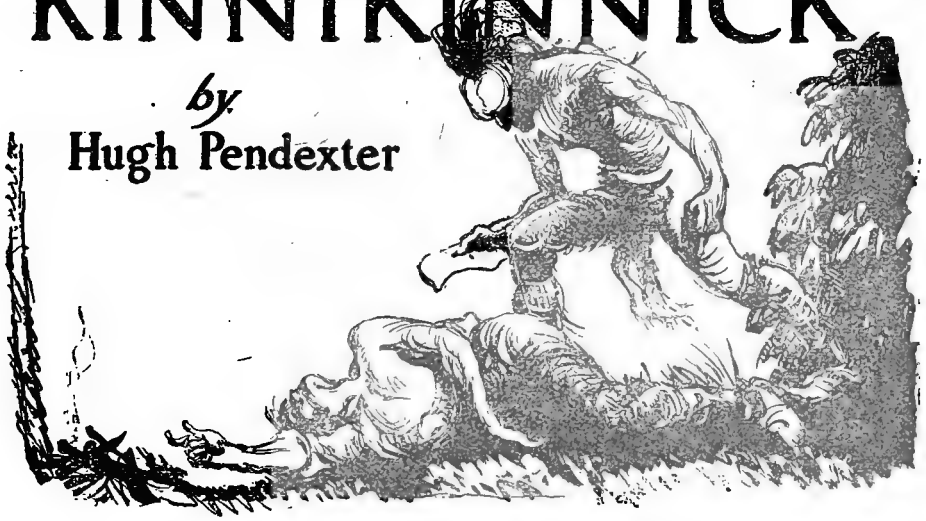
Hobson read:

My great big, fine boy. How proud I am of you. The papers are just full of your brave deed; how you saved the battle and then led the way to your officer and pointed him out where you had taken him for safety—all while you were badly wounded. But they say you will recover.

I am walking just fine now. Of course you know the operation was a success. The nurse wrote you just as soon as it was known. I made her promise to do so before they put me to sleep. Hurry and get well, and come back to me. Lots and lots of love. Maggie.

KINNIKINNICK

by Hugh Pendexter



Author of "The Chelsea Vase," "An Emergency Call," etc.

AMOS FINCH stared entranced across the empty waters of the Ohio and marveled at the mystery of it all. The silent forests breathed a virility that challenged his best strength. In a vague fashion he sought to analyze his emotions and learn why he was contented only when in lonely places. At his back was the Kentucky country, a paradise to him till the Virginia pioneers, after the Revolution began seeping through the mountain pass named after the dissolute Duke of Cumberland. Once the smokes began stealing round the horizon his unrest urged him north, driven by an inexplicable longing to press on and be alone.

Mingled with this blind adoration of nature and her forces was the instinct of self-preservation, the knowledge that north of the Ohio a great menace to the invading whites was always lurking beneath the brooding forests. It was in the north that the Kentucky man looked for danger. The unexplored fastness of the Ohio country was the birthplace of war parties long after the turbulent Chickasaws in the south

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ceased to be a serious obstacle to settlement.

The Ohio while fascinating Finch always oppressed him with sinister forebodings. He knew his destiny would send him there some day. It drew him on with threats. A sense of duty had held him at the settlement on Laurel Lick till he had satisfied himself no red raiders would come this season, the warriors being too busy with the Fall hunting in the deforested regions in the west.

But now he was at the river he was awed by the silent rush of its waters and the almost painful silence of its heavily timbered shores; and intuitive warnings filtered into his soul which no amount of logical reasoning could eliminate. As he watched the river he could even feel the evil approaching and fancied he heard across the wide current the rushing *pad-pad* of countless moccasins.

He focused his gaze on a wooded point opposite his covert as though deciding it was there the Red Peril would emerge. Experience had taught him that solitude can play strange tricks with a man's imagination, and he dimly understood how men long marooned in primeval environments could see the sky filled with the bison and the hunting bands of Indians.

He examined his long rifle mechanically and settled closer among the sumac to watch and wait. The old ecstatic thrill—his only reward for undertaking such ventures—was strongly upon him. He scented danger, unknown and intangible, and yet was conscious of a soothing calm upon his spirit. The instinct which held his objective senses on guard was a secondary influence, for his searching gaze and attentive ears interfered none with his misty contemplation of the grandeur and vastness of it all.

Squirrels decided he was inanimate and played up and down the trees close to his head. The result of the conflict between red and white impinged upon his meditations and caused him sorrow; for the domination of cabin over wigwam must terminate this glory of the wilds. His sympathy for the primeval unfitted him for settlement building; just as it incensed him against the Indian for deforesting large areas by fire to furnish pasturage for the buffalo. Ruthless clearing of the noble timber, whether by red or white, appealed to him as the height of the sacrilegious.

As he drank in the gorgeous aspects up and down the river instinct again demanded his earnest attention, this time peremptorily and his gaze narrowed and remained fixed on the point where the wild grape-vines ran riot through the bush growth. The spot became a danger zone.

As he marked it for continued observation he found time to wonder idly whether if the middle of the river really rounded higher than the shore levels. This was a pleasing speculation but as he enjoyed it he kept careful tabs on the splotch of crimson on the opposite shore. Then he placed his day-dreaming aside as the nose of a canoe glided from behind the point and shot into midstream.

The occupant was a white man, and his frantic haste in wielding the paddle suggested flight from the horror of the north country and a seeking for sanctuary among the Kentucky settlements. Finch remained concealed till the light craft had quartered the current and drove straight toward him. Seeing he was to be discovered the scout rose and resting his rifle in the crook of his left arm stepped from cover and flung up his right hand in greeting.

The man in the canoe nearly capsized, but quickly recovered his balance and in great relief cried:

"A white man! Thought ye was a Injun."

As he swirled inshore Finch noted his face was cadaverous as though filed down by hunger. Leaping from the canoe the newcomer informed:

"I'm from th' lake country way north. Versar's th' name. Chased by th' red devils four days 'fore I could shake 'em off."

"Shawnees, I opine," remarked Finch as he helped lift the canoe among the bushes.

"War party," shivered Versar, glancing uneasily across the river. "Mebbe they're makin' south f'r yer settlements."

"Prob'ly. My name's Finch. Nearest settlement is on Laurel Lick. How many?"

"'Bout thurty was all I seen. Only had one look at 'em, an' that from top of a tree as they crossed an openin'. Ain't seen 'em since but I've *felt* 'em at my heels ev'ry minute."

Finch nodded to show he understood the psychology of the other's premonition, and said:

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"S'pose I must turn back an' pass the word. Was goin' across. Or mebbe ye know the country down here an' can carry th' warnin'."

"Don't quit me," begged Versar. "My nerve is about give out. Never was down here afore. Don't ye go to quit me."

"I can't, seein' yer green to this country," growled Finch, deeply disappointed at being called back to the rut of duty. And he turned abruptly and strode into the woods with Versar padding at his heels.

At twilight they knocked over some squirrels with sticks and supplemented them with some parched corn from Finch's pouch. Versar was in something of a panic and started nervously at each woods sound and after their hasty meal was for pressing on regardless of the darkness.

Finch quietly remonstrated:

"We've got a certain distance to go an' have time enough to make it without travelin' nights. We'll sleep an' start early. Smoke up an' quiet yer nerves."

He passed his tobacco but Versar refused it, preferring his own and its adulteration of bark and leaves.

"Kinnikinnick! A Injun trick," disdainfully grunted Finch and puffing out a blue cloud of his own strong brand. "Injuns can't stand th' straight article."

"Force o' habit with me," said Versar. "Had to mix it f'r years to make it last an' I got so I like it best this way."

Finch was not interested and fell to staring at the handful of coals over which they had broiled their game. At last, with a curt nod, he turned in for the night.

WHEN Versar awoke next morning Finch was missing, but shortly put in an appearance, informing:

"Been over our back trail to see if there was any signs. Ev'rything seems quiet enough. Opine we're takin' needless bother."

Their breakfast, consisting of more squirrels and corn, was bolted and as the sun penetrated the forest tops they were well under way. Finch took the lead as pathfinder and proceeded at a half run. At his heels, moving as lightly as a shadow, loped Versar. No breath was wasted in speech till they struck a wide tract of charred trunks and stumps.

"Swung too far to one side," muttered Finch.

"Then le's git back where we belong," impatiently urged Versar, beginning to skirt the burnt area.

Finch glared after him, as though resenting his taking the initiative, pressed his thin lips tightly and fell in behind. As they were drawing beyond the end of the burnt piece Finch exclaimed sharply and Versar wheeled to behold him standing on one foot and nursing his ankle.

"Twisted her on a root," groaned Finch, hobbling forward.

Versar kept the lead, accommodating his pace to that of his companion but hardly able to conceal his annoyance at their slow progress.

"If ye can't travel by mornin' better'n this I'd better light out ahead with th' warnin,' " said Versar that night as they rolled in their blankets. "Th' first men I meet can come back to fetch ye in. Ye can give me th' direction so's I can hit the settlement."

"I opine I'll be able to foot it better termorrer," grumbled Finch.

The forest was still gloomy and damp with the morning shadows when the two men resumed their hurried journey. Finch tied a strip of deerskin about his ankle and took the lead in picking a route through the noble aisles. Late afternoon he came to a halt on the bank of swiftly flowing stream, racing bankful from the fall rains.

"Struck it wrong again," lamented Finch, slowly peeling off his deerskin frock. "Oughter hit it lower where there's a string o' rocks f'r fordin'."

Versar was exasperated, and criticized!

"F'r a man used to this country ye make lots o' mistakes. Le's hunt f'r the ford. I ain't hankerin' f'r swimmin'."

"Ye won't need to swim," placated Finch. "It runs swift but it ain't more'n waist deep most o' th' way."

Versar grimaced as he dipped his hand into the water and found it cold. But Finch already was stripped with his scanty garments rolled in a wad and strapped on his head with his belt. Muttering under his breath Versar followed his example. They cautiously felt for footing, inclined their bodies upstream to counteract the pull of the current and held their rifles high above their heads. They were nearly ashore when Finch gave a little cry, hardly audible above the noise of the stream, and seized his companion's shoulder. Versar staggered

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frantically but managed to maintain his balance by wildly brandishing his arms.

"What ye tryin' to do?" he fiercely demanded as they gained the bank and proceeded to dress.

"Ankle give way like it was broke plumb off," groaned Finch.

"Stay here an' take it easy. Some one'll be back to help ye in afore mornin'," said Versar.

"No; I'll see it through. Go ahead; I'll be all right," gritted Finch.

By sundown they struck the headwaters of Laurel Lick, and with this to guide them pressed on through the darkness and arrived at the settlement early in the morning. A hurried council of war of all males was called, once they had given their warning, the women and children remaining outside the cabin to await the verdict.

"Mind ye I don't know's they plan to cross the river," said Versar after reciting his adventures in winning south. "I only seen 'em once but I know they trailed me f'r four days. An' there was thurty on 'em to my best judgment."

"We're eight fightin' men now," spoke up Finch. "Shall we stick here or take th' women an' childrun to Tibel Town?"

"How many men at Tibel Town?" asked Versar.

"A dozen," glumly replied a young settler, all of whose fears were for the safety of his comely wife.

"I say we'd better go to Tibel Town an' j'ine forces," slowly declared Versar. "'Cause there's the risk of their overtakin' us afore we can make it, hampered as we'd be with the women an' younkers."

Finch promptly opposed any retreat, repeating Versar's words and insisting there was great danger of being overtaken. Versar at once changed about and urged the danger be met there. The others were nearly won over to this decision, especially so when Versar reminded that he had no knowledge of the Indians' plans and that for all he knew they had no idea of crossing the Ohio.

While the settlers were wavering in the balance the young settler anxiously inquired——

"Don't s'pose ye know if Brown Turtle was leadin' 'em?"

The little circle looked very grave. Brown Turtle held a deadly hatred of the Kentuckians and more than once he had advertised the cunning and bravery of *Nama-tha*, the Turtle clan, along the border. Versar replied he knew nothing beyond what he had related. Finch insisted so redoubtable a war chief as Brown Turtle would never bother to lead a handful of warriors, as big coups were his specialty.

The young and anxious husband met this argument by retorting that Brown Turtle was always doing the unexpected and that the bulk of his warriors were probably away hunting against the needs of Winter. Finch's opinion lost its weight. While loath to take the back track the men were reluctant to remain and expose the women and children.

"If we only knew if th' Turtle was leadin' 'em or not it would be easier to decide," remarked one gnarled-faced old veteran.

Versar turned the scales by offering:

"I'll go to Tibel Town an' give warnin' an' then fetch some o' th' men back to meet ye. Finch can't go along because of his ankle. I'll bring a force to meet ye afore ye're more'n half-way there."

Finch warmly endorsed this proposal and the others quickly agreed. It was further decided that Versar should start as soon as he had had three hours' sleep, Laurel Lick to be his guide. With that the men scattered to their cabins to aid the women folks in making up small packages of provisions and in caching their scanty tools. Versar rolled in his blanket on the floor and instantly fell asleep. Finch hobbled across the clearing to the home of the young couple. He tarried there but a short time before lounging into the near-by forest.

"He's mighty fond of ramblin' round f'r a man with a hurt leg," sourly observed the young settler.

"I'd feel safer if he'd stay close by. We may need his rifle," she sighed.

But Finch, moving like a ghost through the stately oak and beech, believed duty was calling him from the clearing. He walked rapidly, his ankle retarding him none, his gaze seeking a thicket of undergrowth. Undergrowth was rare to find where the age and height of the trees left a forest floor comparatively clear of such litter.

At last he came to what he wanted and made it a place of concealment. Then began the task of patient waiting. It was not till dusk had rendered his vision uncertain that his long vigil was rewarded. He had glimpsed something slipping behind a tree.

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After an interval of a few minutes he stole from his hiding-place and proceeded due west.

Before night could settle down and block him he found what he had been eagerly eagerly looking for, the imprint of a moccasin, incautiously left in a bit of marsh. He circled it and found where the damp moss had been disturbed on a prostrate tree-trunk. The tracks were freshly made and led north.

Now the darkness rushed in, but with a subtle animal sense he pressed on and avoided all obstacles. Three hours before sunrise, when man sleeps his soundest, he halted and sniffed the damp air critically. The pungent odor of smoke was in his thin nostrils although camp-fires should be dead or dying at this hour.

Running his hand over his belt and removing the wrapping of skin from the lock of his rifle he quartered back and forth, seeking the source of the smoke, till he discovered a tiny spear of flame. He reconnoitered it leisurely, then advanced, drifting from tree to tree. When he halted he was within a few yards of the figure of a man bowed before a small camp-fire, intent with broiling some game on a green stick. As the man waited for the meat to cook he filled a short pipe and puffed contentedly. The aroma of kinnikinnick floated back to the silent watcher and caused his long, thin face to grimace in disgust.

Gliding forward till directly behind the bowed figure Finch drawled—"This ain't scurcely th' way to Tibel Town."

Like a flash the bent figure straightened and whirled, and as Finch dropped on his face a tomahawk whizzed over his prostrate form. Then the two came together and fell across the fire and thrashed about madly.

"Ye hound!" gasped Finch, securing a throat-hold with his left hand.

"It's me! Yer friend!" choked Versar, striving mightily to reach his knife.

"Come to spy an' carry back our number to yer red frien's," panted Finch.

Versar's long legs buckled cunningly, tossing Finch upward, but the hand at the throat was not to be denied.

ONE of Brown Turtle's ambitious young scouts came upon the body and sped back to the main party. Brown Turtle on coming up eagerly tore open the deerskin pouch inside Versar's frock and clicked his teeth exultingly as he withdrew a roll of birch bark. But his savage visage fell in dismay as he unrolled this and studied the crude map of the Laurel Lick settlements drawn in charcoal.

Fifty odd tiny crosses in charcoal decorated the nearest settlement and fully three score surrounded that of Tibel Town. He had believed only a handful of men were at each, and his dead ally had found half a hundred at each. For some time he stood apart in sullen silence, his malevolent gaze directed toward the south. His warriors remained so many images, waiting for him to make his war medicine. When he spoke it was to utter a harsh command. The band began a rapid retreat toward the Ohio.

A few hours later Finch, luxuriously stretched out on the packed dirt floor of the young settler's cabin, smoked his strong tobacco contentedly and explained to the admiring circle:

"I furst opined he might be a 'white Injun' when he showed his likin' f'r Kinnikinnick over honest terbaccer. I got more suspicious after leading him to th' burnt piece an' he took th' lead in th' right direction after sayin' he didn't know th' country. To make sure, I pertended to hurt my ankle an' he led th' way some more without a word to me. But what was th' clincher was when I pertended to slip an' lose my balance in th' run an' he threw up his arms an' I seen the mark o' th' Turtle, o' th' Turtle clan—a white renegade most likely from Girty's Town.

"After I'd settled things personal with him I found maps o' these settlements in his pouch an' he had the fightin' force checked off to a man. My notion is he was to meet one o' Turtle's scouts an' send the infermation back by him an' then come among us an' work deviltry from th' inside. So I added 'nough crosses to send 'em scuttlin' back across th' Ohio, an' I opine they won't come prowlin' round here afore next Spring."

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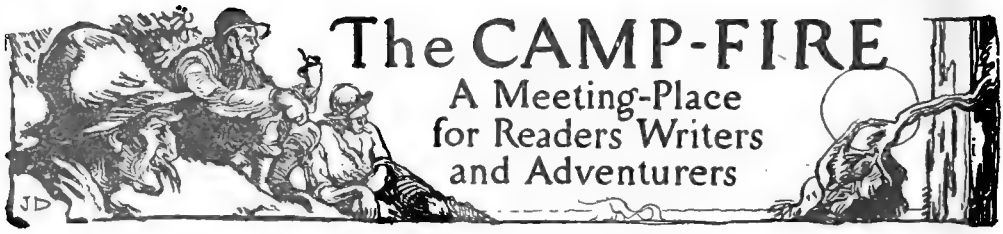

IT'S been a long time since we've had a story by Hugh Pendexter and I think you'll be glad to know that his tale in this issue is the first of many dealing with the old pioneer days in the Ohio and Mississippi valley and elsewhere along the shifting and irregular border-line between the Indians and the white settlers. "Indian stories"—we never grow old enough for them to lose their hold upon our interest. Kit Carson, Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, it wasn't just our boyhood imagination that made heroes of them; they were great figures, they and all the other hardy, fearless men who led the white vanguard against the wilderness. And stories about them are always good hearing.

I IMAGINE we all feel pretty friendly with W. C. Tuttle by this time. Certainly we all owe him a good many laughs and chuckles. I know you'll be glad to hear he has resigned his position as cartoonist on one of the Spokane papers and is giving his whole time to writing stories. One of which is in this issue, and personally I get an unusually large laugh out of it.

THE authors of this month's complete novel, Kathrene and Robert Pinkerton, have been living for some time at a Hudson's Bay Company post up in Canada and this, added to their years of living in the wilderness—thirty miles, as I remember it, from the nearest settlement and a hundred miles from a doctor—gives them a sound foundation for their tales of the North Woods.

THE following from Edgar Young gives us the incident which suggested to him the idea for his story in this number:

The last time I came up the Pacific coast I was on the Pacific Mailer *San Juan*. The ship's doctor became very ill with dysentery just before we entered Acapulco, Mexico, harbor.

The captain asked the native port doctor if there was any one he could get to fill the place into San Francisco. The port doctor said he knew one, an American, who, he thought, would be willing to work his way up. The captain went ashore and brought this man aboard. He was dressed worse than any peon and was much dirtier than one.

THEY gave him some clean duck clothing and he acted as ship's doctor to San Francisco. On the way up I talked with him and grew quite friendly with him. He was not an American, as the port doctor had thought, but a Canadian whose home was in Toronto. His name was ——— and he was a member of the Royal Board of Medicine of England.

Native booze had got the best of him. However, he cut it out on the ship and after we arrived in Frisco he was assigned as regular doctor on one of the Japan boats. I have never heard of him since.

HOW about the Congressmen who are to blame for the delays in getting our country ready for war, who have again and again and again blocked and hindered the war-plans the Administration has been trying to put through? True, our preparations should have been made during the years before war came upon us, but since a state of war with Germany was declared the Administration has been trying to make up for lost time and make the United States as soon as possible effective at the front. The days have dragged into weeks, the weeks into months and a very great part of this tragic delay is due to Congressmen who think it is more important to let the country hear them talk than to do the things they were put in office to do.

There is more than vanity and lack of brains back of their delaying, hindering course. Some of them have been thinking of party and personal interests first and of the country second or not at all. These are as much traitors as ever was Benedict Arnold. We must pass judgment upon them each of us according to his own honest opinion. Are we again to entrust to them the public offices they have proved themselves unfit

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to hold? Do we care so little for our country that we can again put her into these dirty hands? Are we so little loyal and patriotic ourselves that we can reward these disloyal and unpatriotic politicians with high office *again*.

IF THEY honestly oppose the war, they ought to have enough back-bone to say so. Then, when they work to cripple us in our fighting, we can at least credit them with sincerity and courage. Their real duty, of course, is to support the country in whatever course it is following. If they don't like the course, they have a right to try to change it, but *not* a right to hinder and cripple it.

Mark these Congressmen down. When they come up for re-election show them what Americans think of half-Americans.

IN ACCORDANCE with our Camp-Fire custom Robert Russell Strang rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine:

I spent fifteen years in the Yukon and Alaskan Territories where I interpreted the life in several hundred poems, published wherever I happened to be, and so became known from end to end of those countries as the Poet-Miner of the North. During all those years I spent but two Winters on the "Outside," which I employed in making trips around the world and landing back at Seattle flat broke and happy. From there I worked my way to Skagway, hiked once more over the Chilcat to Whitehorse and drifted down the Yukon.

It would be easier for me to say what trades and professions I haven't worked at than to detail those at which I have. Also, I have been a mine operator and several times in several kinds of business.

I WAS born in Scotland forty years ago. My father was a woolen-mill engineer who, besides conducting the choir and playing the church organ, conducted the county choral society, taught music to night schools and privately and produced two playlets a year with the aid of two hundred school-children whom he also taught music. I have met a lot of men in my time but none who was half so busy as my father. There were só many of us that even then—for he received but scant compensation for his work and "toil of spirit"—all of us were obliged to go to work at an early age. He is the composer of many hymn and song and psalm tunes. My mother is a poet who never wrote a word in her life. Both are alive, although my father is now blind.

At the age of seven I went to work in the fields for four months a year. I went to school the remainder of the year. I didn't have any holidays—didn't seem to need them. Before I was twelve I had passed the sixth grade at school with two years of Latin and French, which were obligatory. I was then bound apprentice to a trade at which I worked eleven hours a day. At fourteen, knowing Burns and several minor Scottish poets by heart, Scott, Dickens and Ainsworth, the little town became too small for me; so, having saved up five shillings I walked to the city of Glasgow, thirty-eight miles away.

I SHALL pass over the next two years. Suffice to say I am eternally obliged to an old Jew who kept a bookstore in St. George's Road, not only for the loan of his books gratis—and he had a wonderful collection—but for directing my reading. In this manner, besides coming to know the best in English prose and verse—for his ancestors were Scottish Jews—I had read translations of the best books written. It was about that time I started to write verse.

At eighteen I was a factory foreman earning a big wage. In the meantime I had caught the bicycle craze and become a racer. I was a pro for two years, racing against Zimmerman, Wheeler and James of this country away back in 1895. In my second year I caught a chill which developed into typhoid pneumonia. After my recovery five months later I went to British Columbia and from there into the Klondike.

I HAVE written quite a number of Scottish songs, also melodies—words and melody always came simultaneously with me. As a drawer my schoolmaster pictured a great future for me if I studied. I have sold a few water-colors and spoiled several canvases.

I met my wife on the Atlantic. She is a New Yorker. She was going to London to study. She is quite a famous landscape architect and for several years has contributed to *Garden, House & Garden* and *House Beautiful*, and has been a professor of landscape design. We have two children. My vagabond days are over.

THE germinating incident of "Off the Trail" took place on Hunker creek in the Klondike region. Old —— ——, known to all Yukoners, having contracted scurvy during the Winter of 1897-1898, leased his claim in the Spring to a couple of friends and hied to Frisco to recuperate. Of course, the understanding was that ——'s portion of the clean-up was to have been placed to his credit in the bank.

To this day I don't know whether the men were fools or knaves; anyway, they hired a gang of men and teams, stripped old ——'s bench claim to within three feet of bedrock with the aid of scrapers, sunk two strings of boxes into the bedrock itself, turned on the water through the big ditch they had dug and washed his claim into the creek valley below. It was a good piece of mining, and maybe they didn't intend to blow in all the money. Being a Yukon pioneer myself I know the temptation of the times. And again, everybody thought there was no end to the gold in the country. Old —— never made another stake. He and I took out a pay-dump on Sulfur Creek on a piece of ground I owned there in the Winter of 1903-1904. He died four years ago. The remainder of the story is fiction.

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YOU have read many poems in *Adventure* by A. Judson Hanna. Now, in accordance with our Camp-Fire custom, he tells you about himself; also, he gives you many interesting points on his "Ballad of the Rubber Traders" which appears in this issue.

I will tell the worst about myself first. I was born in Brooklyn. At the adventurous age of twelve I ran away from home. The pangs of hunger and fear of lions in the way (I had been reading Bunyan) forced an early return. At college I burned the midnight oil—writing verses for the college monthly—and as a result was conditioned for not attending chapel at 8 A.M., and prexy sent me an "at home" card. It was a painful interview. I went into newspaper work.

During twelve years of newspaper slavery, doing everything from running a woman's department to writing highbrow editorials, I never spent more than one year in any one city. For this I became labeled a "rolling stone." But I gained a vast knowledge of newspapers and saw all the big cities, which was just what I wanted.

Of course, I've had my experiences, the kind newspaper men have, but few that would make good reading. I am still so far under forty that I hope to see much more of the world and do something really interesting. When I do, you will be wirelessed (collect) to that effect. By predilection, a poet; by tastes a millionaire; by force of cruel circumstances, a grubber.

REGARDING the "Ballad of the Rubber Traders." In May, at the end of the rainy season the *negociante*, or rubber trader, goes up the Amazon and its tributaries to his station with his band of *uleros*, rubber gatherers, establishes his *fazenda*, headquarters, and oversees the working of his claim. At the end of the season he returns to Para or Manaos and lives a life of pleasure till the rains are over again.

The traders are men of varied and complex nationalities. They have been called "a sordid tribe whose morals are those in vogue east of Suez." This, however, is a harsh characterization. As a class they are no more depraved than the run of Americans and Europeans found in semi-civilized countries where social and civil laws are lax. Their lot is a hard one. Cut off from intercourse with men of their kind for many months at a stretch, it is but natural, perhaps, that they overstep the bounds somewhat when they return to the centers of population. Para, which welcomes the *negociante* on his return from the wilds, has been called the Paris of South America; but it has a touch almost Oriental in its life, and a flavor of Monaco, and, being nearer the Equator, cares less for appearances. This explains the verses.

WITH his first story in this issue, Guy D. Wilson follows our Camp-Fire custom and stands up among us to introduce himself.

With somewhat the same feeling I would have, were I paired with Willie Hoppe for a game of billiards I am daring to break into Camp-Fire's midst; for I am sure there are many here, whose adventures would make my experiences insignificant.

I am writing this, below decks on one of Uncle Sam's battle-ships. My typewriter is swung from a shelf-like desk by two brass straps, attached to the lower part of a bunk. I am with the United States Marine Corps, doing the duty of company clerk. Of course I am having some interesting experiences at present, but they are taboo, for where the fleet is, what it is doing and what it plans to do are closely guarded secrets. I can only say—"SOMEWHERE AT SEA."

I WAS born in Texas, but instead of becoming a cowboy, I became an athlete and went East as a gymnasium instructor. Prosaic enough, eh. But I had the wanderlust badly and found myself once in Canada, and for a long time in Mexico. I was in the Republic when Diaz began to totter—the first rumblings of the great upheaval were heard.

One afternoon I stood on the steps of the Dolch Hotel at Eagle Pass, Texas, which is opposite Ciudad Porfirio Diaz, and saw probably the first real excitement of that to be war-ridden country. Suddenly the bridge across the river became congested with Mexicans fleeing to this side of the Rio Grande. They went by the customs employees like a herd of stampeding cattle. "The Revolutionists are coming," they repeated again and again. And sure enough, we looked over the dry plains toward the west and beheld a line, seemingly of cavalry riding toward the city. An hour we watched and then a pair of powerful glasses were brought out. The "Revolutionists" proved to be several hundred burros, loaded with produce from the interior. I relate this just for a comparison with present conditions. A cavalry troop now, would create little excitement in that or hardly any other section of Mexico.

FROM athletics I went into the newspaper game, as sport writer and then all-round man. As police reporter on a Western paper, I had some interesting experiences. Once the quickness of the sheriff, who knocked a pistol from the hands of a desperate Mexican saved my life. We had rounded up four. They had committed burglary. It was past midnight and in a lonesome Mexican settlement, well away from "white" people. I was making myself useful by searching one of the prisoners while the "chief" handled the other three.

Of my adventures in the service, I will say nothing, for there is entirely too much war talk now, and it is possible all of us are "in" for some of that kind of adventure anyway.

The incidents and characters in my story, "The Killing of Lieutenant Cartwright," are largely fiction, based of course on some facts.

NO WHITE man knows all there is to know about how the natives of Africa are able to send news for hundreds of miles in a few minutes. Probably it is done by relays of drums with a secret sound-code, but other and less likely theories have been advanced and I've never happened to hear of any white man who could send or understand the drum-message code.

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Thomas S. Miller, editor of the West African department of "Ask Adventure," gave us the following exceedingly interesting account in our August issue and one of you, writing from Ohio and signing only his initials, adds still another bit of information on the subject. If any of the rest of you can contribute other facts to our stock of information on the subject, go to it. Or on a subject we discussed several years ago, the persistent belief in "elephant graveyards"—places where elephants are supposed to go when they know they are dying and where, incidentally, a lucky human discoverer could find a fortune in ivory.

I can not make out the last word in G. P.'s letter. Looks like "tagate," which may be either an African word or a misreading on our part.

YES, it is a common accomplishment throughout the whole of Africa. Hardly a night, unless in the storm season, but the village drums talk. Sound travels farther in the night. I was stationed for a year in a northern Nigerian village that kept up constant communication with another village four miles up the Niger, where the presence of water considerably helped in transmitting the sound. But I have heard and read that in favorable circumstances this distance has been doubled.

The drum, or tom-tom, is a hollowed log, something of the shape of an egg-glass, with goatskin parchment drawn taut over the ends. The code is something like the Morse code, long and short beats—spacing, that is to say, between the beats.

The drummers of West Africa have what might be called an international code, for villages but a few hours apart have each their own dialect. In this way the business of drumming messages has become specialized, the drummers of the various tribes making a kind of secret society. It is a unionized trade not open to all comers. I never met a white man who could read the code.—T. S. MILLER.

Re African Drum Telegraph in the August issue.

Your correspondent's explanation does not cover all the subject. I understand a hole is made in the ground near to an outcrop, and the top covered with a skin. This is used as a drum and the reef carries the sound to a similar hole on another outcrop. This may explain the natives' knowledge of things which happen 1,000 miles away, early next morning As to which particular strata they bore to, I suppose I shall have to wait till I am considered—(?)—G. P.

DON'T forget our readers' annual vote for the best ten stories in *Adventure* during the year. Any one eligible to vote if he's read at least seven of the issues between January, 1917, and Mid-December, 1917, inclusive. Serials, novels, novelettes, articles and short stories included; poems and "Camp-Fire" barred. Vote closes December 31, 1917, with allowance for those, long distances away. Send in your vote any time after the Mid-December issue appears, but, if not already doing so, begin now to note down your favorite stories. All you need do is write down your ten stories numbered in order of preference, and address and mail us the letter or post-card. If you like, add as many as ten more for complimentary mention. The same author may appear on the list as many times as you please.

The result of the vote will be published in a subsequent issue.

We want our readers to have all the say possible in making our magazine and this vote gives you one opportunity by guiding the editors in choosing the kinds of story the majority of you want. Most of you know that, in addition to the vote, suggestions and criticisms from *Adventure's* readers are always welcomed by *Adventure's* editors. Provided they are definite and specific enough for us to profit by them. We all gain by making the magazine better and better and it's not only more human and friendly but more sensible if we all work together as much as possible.

SOMETIMES some of you in asking for an Identification Card or some other of our free services to readers seem to have a little doubt as to whether you are eligible to that service if you are not a regular subscriber but buy *Adventure* from the stands. Of course you are eligible. The editors make no distinction between subscribers and news-stand buyers; indeed, there are many more of the latter than of the former. Our free services are open to any one who has read *Adventure* enough to know that we offer them. We're always ready to be friends if you are.

SOME time ago there was submitted to us an extremely interesting article on certain ants in a comparatively unexplored part of South America. *Adventure*, as you know, publishes almost no fact articles outside of our "Camp-Fire," one of the chief reasons being that *Adventure* probably covers more and more remote fields than any other magazine and it would be next to impossible to verify all the articles that would come in to us. Most of them, doubtless, would not need verifying, but there would always be the chance that, if we did

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not verify, some day we'd print a fact article whose facts were unsound or purely imaginary. And you can bet your last cent that there would be at least some one among this Camp-Fire gathering of ours who would happen to know the real facts in that particular remote field and promptly call the bluff.

Ours is an especially poor bunch to hand bluffs to on the chance that none of us have been to any remote spot you please to select. But we want to keep *Adventure* free from bluffs.

THIS article on ants was mighty good reading. So much so that we sent copies of it to a number of sources for verification. As the following letters serve to show, we didn't get it. It doesn't necessarily follow that the author was consciously or unconsciously drawing on his imagination. It is always possible that some wanderer may happen upon a natural phenomenon that even the best scientific experts will refuse, quite rightly, to believe until they have indisputable proof. But, being unable to verify the article, we didn't publish it.

I bring the matter up only because ants are such blamed interesting critters and because some of you who know the far corners may be able to give the rest of us some very interesting observations. Also because a letter from Mr. Marchant of the Pan-American Union at Washington, one of the sources we queried, was so particularly appreciative of our ordinary effort to avoid misstatements about a matter pertaining to our neighbor Brazil. This led me to "get off my chest" something I've wanted to say for a long time. I'm a firm believer that if this country is to be wise and farsighted in its international policies one of its first duties is to build up close friendly relations with South and Central America, binding us all together in defensive alliance in support of the Monroe Doctrine against aggression from other continents.

NORTH AMERICANS are too prone to consider all Latin-American countries much inferior to our own. They are, in some ways, but we lose sight of the fact that we are inferior to them in others. As people, we are vastly *different* and neither side satisfies the standards of the others. But that is no reason why we shouldn't be friendly instead of critical of each other. And their safety and advantage as well as our own lie in a sound understanding and sympathy that will line us up all together against any foreign aggression aimed anywhere at this hemisphere from our northern boundary to Cape Horn. We have learned the bitter lesson that a few brief years can make mighty changes in the world of nations. Who can say that a firm Pan-American defensive understanding may not in the next few years prove of vital value to all of us between Patagonia and Dakota or even the Arctic?

BACK from international politics to ants. Besides an extract from Mr. Marchant's letter I give another from the head of the biological department of one of our largest universities. As I've not yet received his permission to use his name it is omitted. And how about the rest of you? Any interesting observations on ants to pass along?

Also there's that other subject on which various scientists have taken violent exception to the statements of some of you, said scientists holding that there are no snakes in the world so long as the fifty-footers that certain adventurers claim to have seen when sober. It would be a triumph if a fifty-foot skin or other final evidence could be dangled in front of our friends the rightly conservative scientists.

Here are the ant letters:

I have not met with any instance of such perfect military organization among ants as that which is here described. We all know that ants move in concert, seem to obey a definite chief, recognize one another by feeling. This we can observe among any ants—for instance, the small red ants of this country. I once witnessed in Brazil what might be called a civil war among the large red ants called *Sauvas*. There was great destruction on both sides, but the conflict did not strike me as being novel or extraordinary as I had read when a child a description of a similar battle in an American school reader.

As to the perfect organization of the ants in regular military bodies, marching eight abreast with exactly four lines to the inch as described in the sketch, I have never seen it, or heard any mention of it during my long residence in Brazil.

—L. MARCHANT.

The article is valueless as it is merely an absurd exaggeration of well-known observation on certain Brazilian ants. The author has evidently combined two species of ants in his account, namely the army ant (*Eciton*) and the leaf cutter (*Atta*). It is safe to say that no ants exhibit anything like the regularity of marching, officering, etc., which the author described. No such insects arrange themselves in

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such a very regular pattern in their activities. It is strange, however, that observers continually describe them as marching in definite phalanx with officers arranged at definite points, etc. The tunneling under the river is evidently derived from hearsay as some of the older authors claim that some of the larger species of *Atta* tunnel under the Amazon.

The ants of Matto Grosso are pretty well known and no such remarkable ant as the one described would exist in Brazil without extending into some well explored portion of the country. —— ——

IT ADDS greatly to the interest of our Camp-Fire gathering to stop and try to realize just how big that gathering is and from how many and how distant nooks and crannies of the world our comrades come. From time to time we've printed letters in a sort of informal contest to find the strangest place in which a copy of our magazine has been found and those strange places have ranged all the way from the most distant jungle to a village just captured from the Germans. To pick up a new number of the magazine and realize in how many places other men are reading that same number of that same magazine is a bit of an adventure in itself, but to pick up a *back* issue and turn loose your vision in a guess at how far and through how many hands other copies of that same issue have had time to wander, well, it gives a stay-at-home—or anybody else—quite a mental journey round about.

Just by way of a quite ordinary sample, here's a fragment from a letter dealing mainly with other matters, a letter from Utah. And those copies of our magazine that he happened to meet—how many had already met them and passed them on, and who met them next and where and under what circumstances? And *then* where did those copies go and what became of them at last or are they still wandering somewhere via brakebeam or forecastle or sled or canoe?

Have run across copies of it in the *Heilsarmee* (Salvation Army) lodging-house, and the *Herberge zur Heimath* or hobo lodging-house hang-outs in Germany and the Austrian Tyrol; in the seamen's lodging-houses in Rotterdam, Holland, and along the docks in New York, San Francisco, and Honolulu; in the Y. M. C. A. reading-rooms on the Mexican border, and in fact every spot where I've chanced to linger for a while during my roamings. When it comes to being a magazine with an international circulation, I think *Adventure* beats them all.—V. S.

I AM not an admirer of William Randolph Hearst. Long ago I ceased to read his papers, but the following editorial in the New York *American* of July 23d was brought to my attention and it seems to me so clear, so simple and so unanswerable a statement of our bitter need for universal compulsory military training that I give it here:

Universal Training and Selective Draft Are Not Synonymous

IT IS a mistake to speak of the selective draft as universal military service.

The selective draft picks out a few hundred thousand young men and makes them actual soldiers.

Universal military service makes every man, young and old, a potential soldier.

The selective draft is essentially a war measure. It comes into play in an emergency.

Universal military service is rightfully a peace measure. It should be enforced all the time.

The purpose of the selective draft is to make war.

The real purpose of universal military training is to prevent war.

For many years the Hearst newspapers have advocated universal military training on the ground that if the nation were thoroughly prepared to make swift and powerfully effective war, no nation and no combination of nations would be at all apt to seek war with us.

We dislike to see the selective draft and universal military service confused in the public mind.

It is the announced intention of the Government to dismiss to their homes at the end of the war the troops selected and trained under the conscription law.

If that intention is carried out and no measure of universal training is adopted, we shall be just as helpless in a military way five years after the war is ended as we were the day war was declared.

The object of universal military training is not to make every American youth a soldier. Not at all. Not by any means.

The object of universal military training is to make our boys and young men healthy, strong and active, and to give them a rudimentary knowledge of the soldier's trade, so that in case of sudden war a great army can be called to the defense of the nation, consisting not of wholly untrained men but of men who have already had their preliminary training given to them in brief periods during their young manhood.

In practise, universal military training would send all young men between the age of eighteen and the limit age, say, of twenty-five, to the training camps for a period of four to six weeks in each year.

These periods of training would work no hardship upon the men themselves, nor would they in any way interfere with the business activity of the country.

The training camps and the military schools to educate officers would be in continuous operation the year around, so that at no one time would more than eight per cent. of the young men of the country be absent from their regular occupations.

The gain to the nation in the way of a healthier, better-disciplined and better-trained mass of young citizens would far outweigh the cost of maintaining the training establishments, and the comparatively small loss of productivity occasioned by our young men being given an annual four weeks' vacation from their usual occupations.

At the very best, the selective draft is a slow and

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unsatisfactory method of raising a large army of troops.

We have now been formally at war with Germany for over three months, and the selective draft plan has not yet picked out a single man of the six hun-hundred thousand who are to be sent to the training camps.

If, instead of being at war with Germany, who has her hands full defending herself against four powerful neighboring nations, and therefore can not strike at us, we had been the object of a sudden naval and military attack launched against us by even a single great power—Japan, for instance—and we had been compelled to rely upon the selective draft and to spend one hundred days in the preliminaries of selection, our enemies would have had us by the throat and we should have been badly hurt, probably defeated, before we were able to put up any fight at all.

It has been in view of just such a disastrous possibility that the Hearst papers, year in and year out, have urged universal military training.

Had the country adopted such a plan even at the outbreak of the European war, we should never have witnessed the miserable and shameful fiascos in Mexico, and we should have been ready in April last, when we declared war upon Germany, to make real war.

Unfortunately, we could not prevail upon the Administration and upon the Congress to institute universal training.

No later than a year ago last January, Mr. Wilson publicly remarked that military preparedness might serve as a topic of academic discussion, but was not a matter which interested practical statesmen.

At that time the whole world was aflame with war, and every thinking man could see plainly that the policies of the Administration were heading us straight toward participation in that war, but neither the dangerous signs and circumstances of the times nor the arguments and the urgency of thinking and more far-sighted men could induce the Administration or the Congress to make any preparation whatsoever for war.

During all that period no heavy guns were cast for the use of the army, no machine guns were manufactured, no airplanes or seaplanes were built, no aviators were trained, the Government rifle plants remained idle, and not one of the ten million available young men of the country was called to a training camp, with the exception of those who chose to volunteer, either as recruits of the regular army or as members of the National Guard of their State.

So far as Federal preparedness for the war that any man of sense could see was imminent was concerned, not one single thing was done by the Administration or by the Congress until April of this present year, after war had become an accomplished fact.

Now, then, in order to prevent similar statesmanship from ever again placing the country in such a precarious and such a dangerous situation, we renew our advocacy, and we shall steadily persist in our advocacy of a system of universal military training.

The country must never again face war dependent for its defense upon the clumsy, inefficient and dangerous expedient of a forced draft, which, at the very best, can only begin TO START TRAINING soldiers months after war has been declared.

We must insure ourselves for the future against such danger as that.

We must give every able-bodied American boy and young man the rudiments of military training, so that the nation will always have established military training camps and a great body of from six to ten million partially trained men, who can be mobilized and be equipped and be ready to defend us against any attack in a third of the time that it takes the managers of the selective draft to decide who shall be drafted.

It may be that in the present emergency there was nothing to do but to use the selective draft.

But if that is the case, we do not want the nation to have to face another such emergency and another such inadequate method.

What we urge the Administration to do, and the country to insist that the Administration shall do, is to begin now a system of universal military training, not for offense but for defense, a system under which the country in any future emergency will have soldiers ready to protect it and preserve it.

FEW detailed accounts of the earthquake that wrought such havoc and destruction in San Salvador on June seventh have reached this country, so the following letter from our comrade W. E. Brandon will have particular interest, especially to those of you who have been through similar experiences:

San Salvador,
June 14, 1917.

I suppose you have read all about the earthquake we poor devils have been enjoying (?) here. I will not attempt to describe it to you, for I have not the literary ability. But I can at least tell you of my own feelings:

I had been in the city for a few days only, and was staying at the Palace Hotel (Palace in name only), and on the night of the seventh of this month I was just sitting down to take dinner when the first shock came. I, with all the rest, ran into the street to escape the falling tile loosened from the roofs. After a moment or two things seemed to quiet down and I returned to my table. Just as I sat down the second time another shock came and slid all my soup out of the plate and on to the table. As I did not have a great deal of appetite for soup, anyway, I got up and leisurely went on to the street. I say "leisurely" advisedly, as there were people in front of me and I could not get up any speed. By the time I got to the street the third shock was in progress and the lights all went out.

The street was full of natives on their knees, praying, chanting, shrieking, groveling—oh, well, words fail. An automobile glared balefully from a distance down the street. In the shafts of light the fear-stricken faces showed waxen and reminded one of certain passages in Dante's "Inferno." A slight glow was cast over everything by the reflection of the light from the erupting volcano. Everything looked ghastly, unearthly, unreal.

I PICKED my way through the hysterical crowds until I reached the park, a couple of blocks away. There there was nothing heavier than a statue or two to fall on me, so I stayed until the volcanic ash began to fall. Then I took a walk down to the railway station and back. On my way back I grew tired,

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for the cobblestones made bad walking. I was afraid to walk on the sidewalk for fear of falling walls. (Note: Just now a shock came that nearly threw this mill off the desk.)

Well, as I say, I grew tired and decided to rest. I sat down on the curb, but just as I placed myself the most terrific shock we have had occurred. It literally threw me bodily into the middle of the street. When I picked myself up the place where I had been sitting was buried under a falling wall. The scene was past description.

If the people were hysterical before, they were frantic now. Groups formed and recited formulas from the Roman Catholic faith, and with every succeeding shock their voices rose to wails.

NO ONE knows how many shocks we have had. The third shock wrecked most of the instruments. But it is estimated that we have had over five hundred since the evening of the seventh and, as per my note on the other page, you can see that they still continue. In fact the shocks last night and this morning seem to be getting stronger. We are in no immediate difficulty as far as flowing lava is concerned, for all the lava is flowing down the opposite side of the volcano. There are nine craters now—or were yesterday. There may be more now. And we do not know when a *boca* may open on this side. There have been few deaths here, but on the other side hundreds, perhaps thousands, have perished in the most horrible manner.

ON THE morning of the eighth I came to the Legation and volunteered for relief work. I don't know about the relief, but I got the work. But I am glad to be able to do something to relieve the suffering.

I had intended returning to the States from here, but I will be unable to do so. So I suppose I shall remain in the city until next year.—W. E. BRANDON.

WHEN the war is over—which may be a few months from now but is far more likely to be several years from now—there will be two kinds of people in this country. (That is, if we win the war; if we lose it, God knows what conditions will be.) One kind will be those who are no richer than they were before the war, the other kind those who have somehow become much wealthier while the fighting was going on.

I'd rather belong to the first class; their lack of increased wealth won't be final proof that they've been truly patriotic but it will certainly be a strong argument in their favor.

The others, those who will be richer at the end of the war, all of them will be more or less under suspicion. It is not a pretty thing to emerge alive and richer from a period of national struggle in which your fellow countrymen have been pouring out their blood, their lives and their treasure. Dollars have ceased to be just dollars. On each of those added coins there is the blood of American men, on each of them the salt tears of American women and children. If a real man takes one of them into his hands he will want to be very sure that his hands have a right to touch them, that, if he is now taking profits from his bleeding country he has earned his right to do so by giving to her at least as fully in her need and that his profits are no larger than a real man can take from suffering and extremity without need of shame.

THE man who, in either peace or war, but especially in war, holds up his own country for more than ordinary legitimate profits, thus taking advantage of her necessities or her helplessness, is exactly the same kind of fellow who kicks a man when he is down, who betrays his comrades in a common cause, who stabs a friend in the back for profit.

We have not yet learned to think of him in this light, but when we stop to think about it we know that it is true. We know that Benedict Arnold is a better man than this fellow. Arnold was comparatively open in his treachery and at least was man enough to risk his life. We have more respect for a burglar than for a sneak-thief.

It is time we came to see this fellow as he is. Beside him the jackal, hyena and coyote are brave, the buzzard and vulture clean, the cur noble, the viper trustworthy. He should be a pariah and an outcast, an object of contempt and loathing, and we can make him so.

WATCH carefully the men who are richer after the war than they were before. Perhaps they will have a clean and honest right to be, but perhaps not.

Among the people prominent in the public eye, and still more so among our own personal acquaintances, we can do quite a little toward sorting the sheep from the goats. Let us make it our duty to do so. Let us write it down in our hearts that such men are sneaking traitors and skulking parasites and that neither gold nor position can buy them place in our respect or make them anything in our eyes except the dirt and filth that they are.

—ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

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For All Interested in Military and Naval Affairs. The Fifth List of Books

An Officer's Notes, by Capt. R. H. Parker. A condensed compilation of Army Reg., military law, small arms, field service, topography etc.—George U. Harvey, 109 Lafayette St., New York. $2.00.

Handbook of Transportation, by Lieut. Col. C. B. Baker. Authoritative book on rail and commercial vessels. Valuable to army officers.—George U. Harvey, 109 Lafayette St., New York. $1.00.

What a Company Officer Should Know, by Maj. J. C. McArthur. Takes young officers from home to the firing-line.—George U. Harvey, 109 Lafayette St., New York. $2.00.

The Elements of Military Hygiene, by Major P. M. Ashburn. Especially arranged for officers and men of the line.—Houghton Mifflin Co., New York. $1.50.

Manual of Physical Drill, by Lieut. E. L. Butts. A guide to systematic physical training for both civil and military life. Dumb-bells, wall scaling etc.—D. Appleton & Co., New York. $1.50.

Prompt Aid to the Injured, by Alvah H. Doty, M. D. A manual for both civil and military use. Arranged for use by military ambulance corps.—D. Appleton & Co., New York. $1.75.

Aircraft in Warfare, by F. W. Lanchester. Means of attack and defense, air strategy, bomb dropping, aiming, etc. —D. Appleton & Co., New York. $4.00.

Field Telephones for Army Use, by Lieut. E. J. Stevens, Instructor in British School of Signaling. Includes an elementary course in electricity and magnetism.—D. Appleton & Co., New York. $1.00.

The Book of the Motor-Boat, by A. Hyatt Verrill. How to operate and care for motor-boats and motors.—D. Appleton & Co., New York. $1.10.

ADVENTURE'S FREE SERVICES AND ADDRESSES

These services of *Adventure's* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

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Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

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Will sell: complete set from first issue to July, 1917.—O. W. REISNER, 628 New York Ave., Sheboygan, Wis.

Will sell: complete set from May, 1914, to current issue; 10 cents each, carriage collect.—W. L. ROSSMAN, 323 Indiana Ave., Mishawaka, Ind.

Will sell: 1912, 1913 complete; $3.00, each year $1.60; 1916 complete; $1.25; carriage collect. Want Nov. and Dec. 1910 and all 1911.—H. H. NORTHRUP, North Freedom, Wis.

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Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

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We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located one out of about every five inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Addresses

Adventurers' Club—No connection with this magazine, but data will be furnished by us. Can join only by attending a meeting of an existing chapter or starting a new chapter as provided in the Club's rules.

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. Entirely separate from Adventurers' Club, but, like it, first suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 731 Guardian Bldg., Cleveland, O., in charge of preliminary organizing.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

National School Camp Ass'n—Military and industrial training and camps for boys 12 or over. Address 1 Broadway, New York City.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—A similar organization coöperating with the N. S. C. A. (above). Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for Adventure Magazine by our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each month in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable and standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, but no question answered unless stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
S. B. H. HURST, Box 892, Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Such questions as pertain to laws, customs and conditions local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Hurst.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N.Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel; game, fish and woodscraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, Yankton, S. Dak. Covering North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially* early history of Missouri valley.

9. Western U. S. Part 3
Mexico Part 1
J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

10. North American Snow Countries Part 1
C. L. GILMAN, 708 Oneida Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. R'y. Canoes and snow-shoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

11. North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. ★ Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

12. North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. ★ Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

13. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game; minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkely, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel: boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

15. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 397 Monadnock Bldg., San Francisco, Calif. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

16. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, Sayville, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras.

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Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

17. The Balkans
ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, *Evening Post*, 20 Vesey St., New York City. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.

18. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, care R. J. Neuman, 160 Seaman Ave., Inwood, New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

19. Japan and Korea
ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE, Mountain Lakes, N. J. Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios.

20. Russia and Eastern Siberia
A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Adventurers' Club, 26 N. Dearborn St., Chicago. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

21. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, 1604 Chapin Ave., Burlingame, Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

22. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Castle View, Meriden, Conn. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

23. ★ The South Seas Part 1
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

24. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, care of H. E. ROBERTS, 55 John Street, New York, N. Y. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

Joseph Mills Hanson is another of our "Ask Adventure" editors who has been called to the defense of our country. We hope you will be patient if answers from him are at times delayed.

Mining in Central America

Question—"A friend had told us that pay dirt existed in the hills of (Spanish) Honduras. Does such, to your knowledge, exist; also how about the other countries of Central America in regard to not only metal but gem deposits (you see I have, and still am, working with a jewelry company and know something of gems and semi-precious stones besides knowing how to make assays.)

"Would like very much to know about conditions concerning game, customs, etc. As we expect to 'pack' very little the first question (game) bothers us considerably. Is game (also fruits, vegetables, etc.) plentiful? Is it possible to rely entirely on game, etc.

"What are the local conditions and language of Central America?

"Our equipment, from previous experience does not trouble us, but in regard to arms, is a .30 rifle and three sidearms of 5-.45 enough for a party of three? Is there any law in Honduras prohibiting the carrying of or importation of the above or ammunition for same? Are machetes or an ax to be preferred? About the fevers, yellow especially—is there any way of making one's self immune to same?"—LEN. K. WRIGHT, New York.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—Your friend was quite right when he told you that "pay dirt" existed in the hills of Honduras. Honduras is very rich indeed in minerals. The famous Rosario mine, near Tegucigalpa, the capital, has produced over $16,000,000 in gold and silver during the past thirty years. A few years ago they installed the latest machinery in the milling plant. There are several other paying mines in the same neighborhood. Most of these mines were worked by the Spaniards in the old days. Besides the ore found in these mines great quantities of ore sand have been found in the following rivers: Panal, Rosario, Almendares, España, and some of the streams of the Department of Olancho. Most of this washing is done by women with sieves. I have also seen them using large wooden bowls in the same manner that our people use a pan. It is impossible to estimate the amount of free gold existing among the sands and rocks of the famous mineral zones of Olancho, Yoro (or Yare), and Tegucigalpa.

It is possible to denounce as much as a thousand hectares (2470 acres) for a mining claim and six months afterward fifty cents per hectare is assessed as taxes. However, free entry through the customs is allowed for all needful equipment.

"Nigger" Knight, an Alabama negro, stumbled upon a rich placer mine in Guatemala, near the Honduranian frontier, on the trail from Morales, and this ground has given up over a million dollars' worth of nuggets. I think he is dead now and the mine is being operated by the son of Knight's former owner, as he was a Southern slave.

Nicaragua, also, is rich in minerals. Most of the large mines are in the hands of English capitalists. The placer mining district of the country is located on the Atlantic slope, in and around Prinzapolka. There are also rich quartz mines in this district and quartz reefs that are gold-bearing are known to exist in the Segovia district but as yet are undeveloped.

Not only then is there gold in the hills of Honduras but there is gold in all the countries of Central America and there is also quite a quantity in the republic of Panama. I found a fairly good prospect up the Gatuncillo River about twenty miles from Gatun on the Zone and later five Americans went

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up there and made good wages with a sluice-box.

The former chief dispatcher of the Panama Railway, Mr. C. W. Northrop, bought a claim about sixty miles from Colon and sold several thousand dollars' worth of stock to employees of the road. The trouble with his placer ground, however, was that the gold was imbedded in a stiff clay that defied the action of water. Mr. Northrop, who is a good friend of mine, called on me and asked me to work out a scheme for separating this gold but I was unable to do so. Plenty of coarse gold exists from the bed-rock clear to the very surface of the ground and is held in the clay as if in an amalgam.

Mr. Northrop, although he was absolutely honest in selling the stock and thought he was putting "the boys" next to a good thing had quite a bit of trouble with dissatisfied stockholders who had invested a hundred or so and the management of the company was turned over to William Essex, an employee of the road to avoid further trouble. I have since thought that baking this clay by some method or other might be a good plan. Do you happen to know any plan that would be available? If so you might write Mr. Essex, care Panama Railway, Colon, R. de P.

Now as to precious and semi-precious stones. In 1519, when Hernando Cortez landed on the shores of Mexico he burned his ships behind him and started on his memorable march inland which culminated in the subjugation of the Aztec tribes and the capture of their ruler, Montezuma. He exacted heavy tribute from these people in gold and precious stones. Of the precious stones perhaps the one of greatest significance to the Aztecs was a green stone, called *chalchihuitl*, under which term were included both jade and green turquoise; blue turquoise was also known and highly prized by them, while the emerald was ranked high in the list. It is said that these stones were not used as ornaments but were used in the religious rituals and ceremonies, as symbols of the earth, the sky, the verdure, etc.

In later explorations the Spaniards located the source of the turquoise supply in large quarries in the northern part of Mexico but with the emerald they were not so fortunate. They never found out *where the Aztecs got their emeralds*. Nor has any modern geological investigation brought to light a single emerald vein between the Rio Grande and the Isthmus of Panama. It is possible that the Aztecs as well as the Incas procured their supply from the Chibohas who inhabited the head-waters of the Orinoco River who in turn got their supply from a small tribe called the Muzo. These Muzo mines are now the world's chief supply of emeralds as they have been for several centuries.

While working on the Panama Canal I saw a great quantity of semi-precious stones being picked up in the gravel dredged from the Chagres River. There was a club of men and women who carried on this work as a side line, sending the stones, for the most part, to a firm on your street (probably the one you are connected with) and the stones were sold in the jewelry stores of Panama and Colon as well as San Francisco during the fair. A Mr. Freehan, depot agent at Gorgona, and now depot agent at Corozal, C. Z. was one of the principal collectors. He, no doubt, would be glad to advise you in detail in regard to the class and kind of stones to be found on the Zone.

I think it would be safe to assume that somewhere between the Zone and Mexico lies a great undiscovered field of precious stones. Personally I believe that very little prospecting has been actually done with a view to discovering them. It seems that nine out of ten, or better yet, ninety-nine out of a hundred men who go prospecting in Central America go with the idea of discovering rich placer ground.

If I were you and knew a bit about stones I would specialize on this branch and make the expedition a gem-hunting one solely. There is also a chance of picking up some rare black pearls from the natives along the west coast. Also a side line of shark teeth and alligator teeth to bring back for mounting might not be a bad idea. A great quantity of petrified shark teeth was unearthed in digging the Canal.

About living off the country. In my trip overland from Mexico to the Zone I carried very little. Game abounds in all parts. Deer is plentiful and much tamer than our deer in this country. A jacklight for mounting on the hat is very useful for hunting them at night. Tapir, called mountain cow by the natives, is plentiful. This is an animal resembling the rhinoceros and weighing several hundred pounds. *Conejo pintado*, or spotted rabbit is also plentiful.

I was forced to eat monkey meat (of the white-faced variety) and on an occasion or two ate iguana (edible lizard). There are many nuts suitable for eating. Palm shoots from several varieties of palms make good eating when stewed. Young green bananas, two or three inches long, when boiled and mashed taste like mashed potatoes. Full-grown bananas when boiled will make a good substitute for bread and fried bananas are not bad eating. Breadfruit and breadnuts abound in the low countries, especially in Costa Rica and Panama. There are thousands of peccaries or wild pigs in these countries. There are fish in all the streams. Birds are plentiful and many kinds make delicious meals.

Any native of these countries can go into the jungles and get a meal in a short time. If they can do it and if I and my partner did it it is easy to assume that you, also, can do it.

I had trouble in Guatemala and Honduras in getting my .41 Colt's past the custom officers at the line. I smuggled it through both places under my clothing against my stomach for I was told before reaching these points that they would not allow a gun larger than a .38 caliber to enter. Most of the guns that the natives have are .44 carbines and the powers that be are very careful about letting them obtain ammunition for fear of revolutions.

I would suggest a .38 Colt's target revolver with special sights and hair trigger and wooden handles, taking the .38 special cartridge. I used to carry a 30x30 carbine, a .22 (long) for a table gun and a large caliber Colt's but after being fortunate enough to acquire a .38 Colt's special, that had been made for the champion amateur marksman of the U. S. I became so proficient in the use of this revolver that I was able to discard the 30x30 and used the revolver for hunting large game and for self-protection later in the interior of Brazil.

In the tropical jungles a machete is better than an ax although it might not be a bad plan if more than one is going to have both. Salt is an essential and must be protected from the dampness. My own experience proved wide-mouthed bottles sealed with cork and sealing-wax to be very useful for salt, matches, etc. There are small settlements in all the countries where the supply may be renewed.

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There is no way of becoming immune from yellow fever except by having it. Malaria and blackwater fevers are more to be feared for at present there is small chance of being inoculated with "yellow jack" anywhere in Central America. It is well to have a cheese-cloth *pavillon* or net to stretch over you when sleeping out at night as a protection from mosquitoes and *sanoudos* (small gnats that are very annoying and carry the germ of elephantiasis). I was never troubled with snakes when sleeping out at night and for eight months I was never inside a house. An armadillo ran over my face one night in Costa Rica. It is well to carry a supply of quinine in the tropics and take a two-grain capsule each morning. This will usually keep away malaria and will do you no harm. Powdered bluestone (vitriol) was the best thing I could find to kill the infection in tropical yaws or sores although it is very painful to use.

My suggestion would be to carry as small a pack as possible and to make it a real expedition I would suggest that you go to Panama and outfit there and take the high country trails clear through the whole of Central America as far up as the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. By staying to the high country there is not as much liability of contracting fevers and other tropical ailments. Also the low country is so overgrown with dense jungle that it is almost impossible to prospect it. I made the mistake of striking through the low country in Costa Rica and almost paid for it with my life.

My candid opinion is; by sticking to the mountains and searching carefully in the valleys and on the slopes, a rich gem deposit should be discovered. I, myself, saw some strange-looking crystals and stones in many ledges but I did not then, nor do now, know much of gems in the matrix.

I am constantly in touch with many men who are thinking of making trips into the tropics and many who have "hit the trails" down there. An old pal of mine named J. Herman has just landed in California but as yet I am unable to discover how he fared down there. He wrote me in a letter that he has found parties to finance some of his projects but whether mining or not I was unable to gather. The desire you have to adventure in these countries proves you to be one of my own kind, whether you actually ever go or not, and here's to you.

I am specially glad to hear you say you like *Adventure*. I once found a copy on a park bench in Panama and have been a constant reader ever since and now I am handling a department for them. The redness of a man's blood must be very dim indeed if the appeal of *Adventure* does not reach him.

If there is anything that you wish to know that I have not given in this letter let me know and I will make an effort to supply you. I do not know it all by any means but it is true I learned many things that would prove useful to you on the trip I made.

California Prospecting

Question:—"Your letter is received and thank you very much for your kind information.

"I am not so very much interested in the costs of a prospecting trip. I can easily figure this out as I had some experience from Alaska and from a few hunting trips after big game. What interests me most is the most likely-looking territory for prospecting, the starting-out point and where I could meet some of the experienced prospectors.

"I have never been in California and am entirely ignorant about the way of traveling when out prospecting. Can you use horses or burros for packing? What is about the average length of a prospecting trip?"—L. Busch, Tacoma, Wash.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—Placer ground is found in a great many counties of this State (California) and prospectors may be found scattered all over the State. There is some placer ground in this county, notably on the Jenkins ranch at Newhall, where it is leased to miners.

As I mentioned in my previous letter, there is placer ground in Siskiyou, Trinity and along the Merced River. Then the historic ground of Placer, Eldorado, Calaveras, Sutter, Amador, Nevada, and Yuba is, and has been, since 1849, well known for placer mines.

To make the placer ground of Siskiyou, make Yreka your base. For Trinity start from Weaverville. For the small counties as follows: Calaveras-San Andreas, Amador-Suttercreek, Eldorado-Placerville, Placer-Dutchflat, Nevada-Nevada City or Grass Valley.

You will need one or two burros. They are the prospector's best bower in this country. Learn the diamond and squaw hitches, so you can keep the packs from slipping, study the art of packing an even load, get on good terms with Jack and Jinny, and see that your feet are in good trim. You will cover miles upon miles of territory that has been stacked high and steep.

As prospectors are thick and have been roaming the State for nearly seventy years, don't expect to find a Kalgoorlie or Broken Hill district. Most prospectors I have known have made about ninety days in the mountains, without seeing a town, their regulation trip, though some have been out five months.

Siberia

Question:—"Will you kindly answer the following eight questions about Siberia and Finland?

1. "What are the fur-bearing animals on the Island of Sakhalin, Siberia; Siberia and Finland?
2. "What kind of trinkets are necessary to have to trade with Siberian natives?
3. "What route best to take?
4. "Could one make it in a gasoline launch?
5. "How much capital would one require for hunting and trapping there?
6. "Is it necessary to have a license to hunt and trade there? What's the fee?
7. "Are the natives friendly and do they understand English?
8. "Is there any placer gold to be found there?"—C. C. Stover, Eoberts, Idaho.

Answer, by Colonel Lochwitzky:—1. Bears, wolves, foxes (black, silver, red and white); beavers; otter-sables, Siberian gray squirrels—these are the fur-bearing animals found in Eastern Siberia in general and on the Island of Sakhalin in particular. Finland is ten thousand miles (overland) away from the Pacific coast of Siberia and on account of the war operations there must, at the present time, be left out of consideration.

2. Civilization has spread to even the remote corners of Siberia. The Russian subjects, be they white-men Russians, or wild natives (nomads) of Mongolian origin, know the power of *money* and demand money for the skins of animals they offer for sale. In rare cases (as Professor Charles H.

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Havees and myself found out thirteen years ago) the natives wanted beside money, powder, leaf tobacco, beads, shot, powder and liquor (Russian vodka) in exchange for the skins or food we needed. But, since then, the Russian government has prohibited the manufacture and sale of vodka, and especially *to natives*.

3. The best route from San Francisco, California, to Siberia is via Japan; from there to either Nicolaievsk on the Amur, or to Kamchatka.

4. I am not a sailor and cannot give you any advice as to crossing from United States to Siberia across the whole Pacific Ocean in a gasoline launch. I'd prefer a ten-thousand-ton steamer.

5. This question is hard to answer. It all depends on your taste, requirements and volume of trade you would like to carry on. Sable skin on the Island of Sakhalin can be bought for 12 or 15 rubles (about $6.00 or $7.50); after one would import it into the United States, pay custom duty and for *proper* tanning, one could sell it at about $2.00 or $3.00 profit, as I am told. So considering the expense of the fares both ways and the trouble it would not be remunerative enough, unless one can carry the trade in scores of thousands of dollars.

6. Yes, one has to have permits (licenses) from different Russian officials that, with graft expenses (one cannot do any business in Russia or Siberia without taking into consideration the enormous expense for "grafting" officials) would amount to quite a lot of money. The fee for trading is of four classes, and in each town or district is different, according to the amount of capital and the yearly income.

7. The nomad natives: Tungus, Orotchons, Russian Eskimo, etc., are more or less friendly to merchants. Not only do the natives not speak any other language except the Russian and their own vernacular, but even few Russian officials and merchants speak foreign languages. This would mean lots of misunderstandings, jails (suspected of being a spy, etc.), for a person without an expensive interpreter.

8. Yes, there are quite a number of localities in Eastern Siberia, where placer gold is found. No one can mine there except Russian subjects or mining companies, having Russian directors at their head.

Hope I have answered all your questions. If you should like to hear some more on the above subjects, don't hesitate to write me.

Note:—Colonel Lochwitzky answered this letter just before the Russian Revolution. It is possible that in one or two slight details conditions referred to above may have changed.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

ADVENTURE HAS FOUND ONE MAN IN FIVE ASKED FOR DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS.

PAGE, DONALD W., last heard of in Sonora, Mexico, near Guaymas in the employ of the S. P. Co. Since the Mexican troubles broke out have lost track of him. Also Ed. W. Ford, last heard of in Mazatlan, Mexico, about four years ago. If either see the inquiry, write me at Los Angeles. Remember the old gang at San Luis Potosi and the Club secret explained in the old pest graveyard on the north side of the Santiago River.—Address E. A. WAMSLEY, 625 So. Flower St., Los Angeles, Calif.

TUGGLE, WILL S., last heard of in Temple Texas, 1904. Information concerning him will be appreciated. Old friend Bob D. has good news for him.—Address R. E. D., Box 373, Temple, Texas.

PHILLIPS, WM. L., in Minersville, Calif., last summer. Carpenter by trade. 5 ft. 6 in., 145 lbs., 2 fingers on right hand missing. Any one knowing of whereabouts please write.—E. P., care *Adventure*.

BORDON or Borden, Irene, last heard of at Battle Creek, Mich. Her father is an inventor and used to work in the Maltavita Co., there in 1900 and probably later. He lived somewhere on Orange Ave. It is very necessary for me to hear of her whereabouts and any information will be appreciated.—Address MRS. ETHEL ROSS, 3827 Chamoune St., East San Diego, Calif.

TERRUSSE, L. S. Your father received the Christmas cigars. Write him at old home. O. H. is dying. The old rector has settled everything and remains a loyal friend.—Address L. T., 353.

PAYNE, W. J.; formerly Corporal in "D" Co. 97th Battalion American Legion C. E. F. Write your old comrade. Also Wesson of "A" Co. and Romeo Greenwood of Signal Section.—Address PTE. W. B. CLARK, 6th Ohio Inf., Ashtubula Harbor, Ohio.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

CAMPBELL, ARTHUR, discharged from Montana, Cavalry Feb. 4, 1917. at Douglas, Ariz. Miner by trade. Light hair, blue eyes, Roman nose, about 6 ft. 2 in., 195 lbs. Please write at once.—Address BIRTRUS KEMMERER, Carrollton, Mo.

HEINZE or Hanies, painter and decorator. Last seen in Toronto June 11, '17. Thought to be in U. S. A. Any information regarding him will be greatly appreciated. Address G. A. JOHNSON, 59 Bleecker St., Toronto, Canada.

FOOTSIE, USHER, last heard from in Cumberland, Md., one year ago. Let your old chums hear from you. (Bullet & Charleston Red.)—Address J. L. P., Gen. Del., Shelton, Conn.

LACKEY, PHOENIX A. Last heard from in Tlaxcala, Mex. Nov. 6, 1914. Was managing the Standard Fibre Plant at said place. Was then leaving for Mexico City within a few days where he would stop at the St. Francis Hotel. Supposed to have passed through San Antonio Jan. 13, 1916. Black hair streaked with gray, dark complexion, brown eyes, 5 ft. 6 in., and weighs 170 lbs. Wears a mustache sometimes. Any information regarding him would be appreciated by his daughter.—Address MRS. VERA HARWELL, 629 Live Oak St., San Antonio, Tex.

DUNN, J. G., of Toledo, Ohio. Last seen in Detroit, May 30, 1917. Communicate with your sister and learn news to his advantage.—Address MRS. THOMAS HARRINGTON, Gen. Del., Detroit, Mich.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

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RAMSEY, FITCH W., (or Voet Fitch) may sign name either way. Last heard from in Aberdeen, Wash. Dec. 1915. 30 years, 6 ft., dark gray-blue eyes, sallow complexion, black hair, 165 lbs. R. R. Brakeman and Electrician. Any information regarding his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address MRS. JOHN RAMSEY, Green Forest, Ark.

BASKER, LEWIS, my father; last heard from at Libertyville, Iowa about 23 yrs. ago. 65 years., 6 ft., hazel eyes, dark hair, one finger off on right hand, of German birth but a naturalized American. Came to Iowa from Pa. Any one knowing his whereabouts please notify me.—Address EDWARD E. BASKER, 417 So. Sheridan Ave., Ottumna, Ia.

OLSON, John; last heard of at Nelson, B. C. Sister very anxious to hear from you. Married now.—Address MRS. RAY OSBURNE, 660 Coventry St., Akron, Ohio.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

THE FOLLOWING have been inquired for in full in either the First or Mid-October issues of *Adventure*. They can get name of inquirer from this magazine:

CONWELL, JOHN A., Eastman, Harvey; Flanagan, George; Fodder, "Fat"; Fredericks, Frank; Gullette, Willis; Lawver, I. H.; McAndrews, Don; Moehrig, Fritz; Spurling, Andrew B.; Watson, E. E.; White, John S.; Wiley, Thomas W.; Wilhelm, George Washington.

MISCELLANEOUS: Honduras expedition of 1888. Want men who took part in it.

HASTLAR GAL BREATH, B. Radke Miths, Bertha Wilkins Starkweather.

NUMBERS L. T. 284, C 293, W. 311, W. 312, L. T. 343. Please send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us do not reach you.—Address HARRY ERWIN WADE, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

The mid-November issue, in your hands on October 18th—two weeks from now—has its welcome assured. Besides those mentioned on page 2, you will get the following strong stories:

Cows Is Cows *By W. C. Tuttle*

Magpie Simpkins is peeved! Between troublesome detectives and devout missionaries Piperock is no longer fit for human habitation. Another good half-hour's laugh.

The Sourdough Twins' Last Clean-Up *By Robert Russell Strang*

The *Sourdough Twins* are getting old—too old—and their whole stake will not supply a Winter's grub for both. They face the situation like the true Alaskan pioneers they are.

The Bridging of Malbert Swamp *By James Francis Dwyer*

Malbert Swamp had beaten "*Daredevil Matt*" *Galt*, the Pony Express rider—but *Matt* had a son, and the battle is renewed afresh.

Darcy Deserts *By Clyde B. Hough*

A story of the Philippine Islands—and the experiences of an Army deserter among the savage inhabitants.

The High String *By Roy P. Churchill*

The United States Navy, and a gun-practise which the men of the *Alabama* will never forget.

A Bearer of Belts *By Hugh Pendexter*

Among the unsung heroes of the Revolutionary War are many of the pioneers and trappers who held off or conciliated the Indian tribes on the frontiers. Here one gets his due.

The Wise Man *By Hapsburg Liebe*

What would you do for a fortune? *Mad Blackburn* found one confronting him in Mexico—and he played the game to the limit.

The Strength of Gregson *By Robert J. Pearsall*

Young Gregson receives a call to repair an auto in the heart of a big swamp. Wonderingly he goes, and finds the swamp holds more than an ordinary car.

The Lurking Poison *By Captain George B. Rodney*

A tale of the Southwest which proves just how vicious the Gila monster can be—also some men.

MID-NOVEMBER ADVENTURE

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